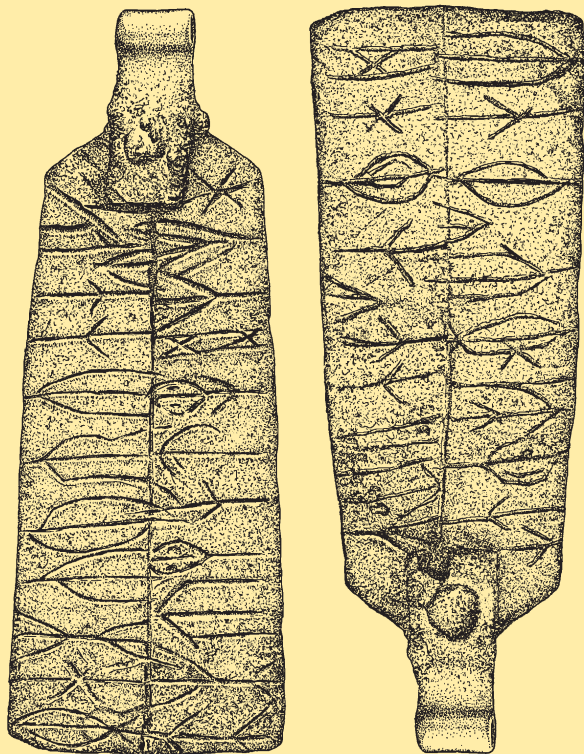


Viking-Age Runic Plates



Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath

ACTA ACADEMIAE REGIAE GUSTAVI ADOLPHI

155

Runrön

21

Runrön

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Runrön 21

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SOFIA PERESWETOFF-MORATH

Viking-Age Runic Plates
Readings and Interpretations

Translated from Swedish by Mindy MacLeod



UPPSALA 2019

Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien
för svensk folkkultur

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Abstract

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The aim of this dissertation is to represent as clearly as possible the genre of *Viking-Age runic plates* by developing readings and interpretations of the inscriptions on the 46 metal plates with runes from the Viking Age known today. Several investigations of the runic plates have been conducted with a stereomicroscope for this purpose. On the basis of the new readings thus established, new interpretations have been proposed for the most problematic sections of previously interpreted inscriptions. New interpretations are also offered for inscriptions on runic plates which have previously been considered non-lexical. As well as providing new readings and interpretations, this study has resulted in clarification of the relationship between the form and content of the inscriptions on the runic plates on the one hand and on their find circumstances and appearance on the other.

An argued documentation of the readings can be found in an accompanying catalogue in Swedish which is published digitally and can be downloaded as a pdf file at:

<<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-383584>>

Keywords: runes, runic inscriptions, runic plates, runic inscriptions in metal, runes on non-monumental objects, cryptic runic inscriptions, reading and interpreting, methods of interpretation, Viking Age, incantations, magic formulas, amulets, magic.

Runrön. Runologiska bidrag utgivna av Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Uppsala universitet.

Front cover: The Ladoga plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

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Textgruppen i Uppsala AB

Памяти моего отца
Ивана Михайловича
Стеблин-Каменского
(1945–2018)

*Dedicated to the memory
of my father Ivan Michajlovič
Steblyn-Kamenskij
(1945–2018)*

Contents

Figures	11
Tables	13
Abbreviations	14
Acknowledgements	16
 1 Introduction and presentation of the material	 19
1.1 Runic plates – an orientation	19
1.2 Literature review	21
1.3 Working hypothesis	25
1.4 Scandinavian spells	25
1.5 Disposition and aim of the dissertation	28
1.6 Labelling and presentation of the material	29
1.7 Terminology	29
1.7.1 General terms	30
1.7.2 Runological terms	31
1.8 Dating	32
1.9 Reading and interpretational methodology	34
1.10 Delimitation of material	36
1.11 Presentation of the material	37
1.11.1 Runic plates: Country and Chronology	38
1.11.2 Typological distribution by time and place	40
1.11.3 Chronological distribution according to content	41
1.12 Conclusions	42
 2 Comparative material	 45
2.1 Older runes in younger runic inscriptions	46
2.2 Staveless runes	53
2.3 Bind-runes	54
2.4 Runes with non-graphematic branches	55
2.5 Coordinate runes	57
2.6 Balanced runes (mirror runes)	58
2.7 Runiforms, rune-like signs and rune-like markings	65
2.8 Conclusions	65
 3 Swedish A-type runic plates with linguistic interpretations	 67
3.1 The Hallbjäns plate, Gotland	67

3.1.1	Find circumstances	67
3.1.2	Earlier readings and suggested interpretations	68
3.2	Sigtuna plate 1, Uppland	70
3.2.1	Find circumstances	70
3.2.2	Earlier readings and interpretations	72
3.2.3	Conclusions and questions	87
3.2.4	New transliteration and interpretation	87
3.2.5	Summary	106
3.2.6	Dating of the Sigtuna plate	111
3.3	The Kvinneby plate, Öland.	113
3.3.1	Find circumstances	113
3.3.2	Earlier readings and interpretations	114
3.3.3	Conclusions and new questions	133
3.3.4	New transliteration and interpretation	135
3.3.5	Summary	150
3.3.6	Dating of the Kvinneby plate	150
3.4	Solberga plates 1 and 2, Öland.	151
3.4.1	Find circumstances and condition of the plates	151
3.4.2	Helmer Gustavson's reading and interpretation	153
3.4.3	Interpretation of Solberga plate 1	155
3.4.4	Interpretation of Solberga plate 2	166
4	Swedish runic plates with linguistic interpretations (type B and fragmentary)	171
4.1	The Ulvsunda plate, Uppland.	171
4.1.1	Find circumstances and current condition of the plate	171
4.1.2	Nordén's transliteration and a new transliteration	172
4.1.3	Nordén's interpretation and new suggestions.	173
4.2	The Järfälla plate, Uppland.	175
4.2.1	Find circumstances and current condition of the plate	175
4.2.2	Earlier transliteration and interpretation of the inscription	176
4.2.3	New transliteration and suggestions for interpretation	177
4.3	The Högstena plate, Västergötland.	179
4.3.1	Find circumstances and present condition of the plate	179
4.3.2	Earlier readings and interpretations	180
4.3.3	New transliteration	184
4.3.4	New interpretation	186
4.4	Old Uppsala plate 1, Uppland	200
4.5	The Skänninge plate, Östergötland.	201
4.6	Two problematic runic plates – Latin or Old Swedish?	204
4.7	Vassunda plate 3, Uppland.	204
4.7.1	Discussion.	206
4.8	Sigtuna plate 2, Uppland	207
4.8.1	Discussion.	210

5	Uninterpreted runic plates from Sweden.	213
5.1	Uninterpreted A-type plates	213
5.1.1	The Leksand plate, Dalarna	213
5.1.2	The Hovgård plate, Uppland	216
5.1.3	Björkö plates 1 and 2, Uppland	219
5.1.4	The Villberga plate, Uppland	221
5.1.5	The Sunnerby plate, Västergötland	224
5.1.6	Klinta plates 1 and 2, Öland	225
5.1.7	Solberga plates 3, 4 and 5, Öland	227
5.2	Uninterpreted B-type plates and fragmentary runic plates	229
5.2.1	Old Uppsala plate 2, Uppland	229
5.2.2	Sigtuna plate 3, Uppland	230
5.2.3	Sigtuna plate 4, Uppland	231
5.2.4	Sigtuna plate 5, Uppland	232
5.2.5	Sigtuna plate 6, Uppland	237
5.2.6	Sigtuna plate 7, Uppland	238
5.2.7	The Eketorp plate, Öland	239
5.3	Uninterpreted C-type plates	241
5.3.1	Gällungs plates 1 and 2, Gotland	241
5.3.2	The Hässelby plate, Uppland	243
5.3.3	The Östra Aros plate, Uppland	245
5.3.4	Summary.	246
6	Danish runic plates	247
6.1	Interpreted Danish A-type plates	247
6.1.1	The Østermarie plate, Bornholm	247
6.1.2	The Roskilde plate, Zealand	249
6.2	Fragmentary interpreted Danish plates	254
6.2.1	The Skørrebrovej plate, Bornholm	254
6.2.2	The Uppåkra plate, Scania	255
6.3	Uninterpreted Danish runic plates of type A	257
6.3.1	Lund plate 1, Scania	257
6.4	Uninterpreted Danish plates of type B and fragments	259
6.4.1	Lund plate 2, Scania	259
6.4.2	The Lockarp plate, Scania	259
6.4.3	The Gyldensgård plate, Bornholm	260
6.5	Conclusions	261
7	Runic plates outside Scandinavia	263
7.1	The Deerness plate from Orkney, Scotland	263
7.2	Runic plates from contemporary Russia	265
7.2.1	Gorodišče plates 1 and 2	265
7.2.2	The Ladoga plate	272
7.2.3	Summary.	290

8	Results and conclusion	292
8.1	The appearance and rune-forms of the Viking-Age runic plates	292
8.2	Glossary of the Viking-Age runic plates	299
8.3	Magic spells on the interpreted runic plates	307
8.4	The content of the inscriptions in relation to findplaces	309
8.5	The runes of the plates: magical symbols?	311
8.6	Final words	312
	Summary	313
	Bibliography	323
	Abbreviations of archival institutions and bibliographical references	323
	Viking-age and mediaeval primary sources	325
	Secondary sources	326
	Internet sources (primary and secondary)	340
	Appendix 1. Collected information on runic plates	342

Figures

Figure 1. Distribution map of the Viking Age runic plates	20
Figure 2. The Sölvesborg stone	49
Figure 3. The Lillbjärs stone	50
Figure 4. The Roes stone	51
Figure 5. The unconventional runes of the Rök stone	52
Figure 6. The Ingelstad stone	53
Figure 7. The Lund bone	56
Figure 8. The Andreas V stone	56
Figure 9. Pieper's exemplification of the mirror runes	59
Figure 10. The imagined staircase before balancing	61
Figure 11. The imagined staircase after balancing.	61
Figure 12. The younger runes with their balanced shapes.	63
Figure 13. The Hallbjäns plate	67
Figure 14. Sigtuna plate 1	71
Figure 15. Sigtuna plate 1: Lindquist's drawing	75
Figure 16. Sigtuna plate 1: Eriksson and Zetterholm's drawing	77
Figure 17. The Kvinneby plate	113
Figure 18. The Kvinneby inscription according to S. B. F. Jansson	115
Figure 19. The picture of the fish on the Kvinneby plate.	147
Figure 20. Solberga plate 1	152
Figure 21. Solberga plate 2	153
Figure 22. The Ulvsunda plate	172
Figure 23. The Järfälla plate	176
Figure 24. The Högstena plate	180
Figure 25. Old Uppsala plate 1	200
Figure 26. The Skänninge plate	201
Figure 27. The Vassunda plate 3	205
Figure 28. Sigtuna plate 2	208
Figure 29. The Leksand plate	215
Figure 30. The Hovgård plate	217
Figure 31. Björkö plates 1 and 2	220
Figure 32. The Villberga plate: side A	222
Figure 33. The Sunnerby plate	224
Figure 34. Klinta plate 1	226
Figure 35. Klinta plate 2	226
Figure 36. Solberga plate 3	227
Figure 37. Solberga plate 4	228

Figure 38. Solberga plate 5	229
Figure 39. Old Uppsala plate 2	230
Figure 40. Sigtuna plate 3	231
Figure 41. Sigtuna plate 4	231
Figure 42. Sigtuna plate 5	233
Figure 43. Sigtuna plate 5: clean sketch of the runic signs	233
Figure 44. The symbols on Sigtuna plate 5	235
Figure 45. Symbols from an Icelandic book of black magic	236
Figure 46. The plate from Källa Old Church, Öland	236
Figure 47. Sigtuna plate 6	238
Figure 48. Sigtuna plate 7	239
Figure 49. The Eketorp plate	240
Figure 50. Gällungs plate 1	242
Figure 51. Gällungs plate 2	242
Figure 52. The Hässelby plate	243
Figure 53. The Östra Aros plate, Elisabeth Svärdström's drawing	245
Figure 54. The Østermarie plate	248
Figure 55. The Roskilde plate	250
Figure 56. The Skørrebrovej plate	254
Figure 57. The Uppåkra plate	256
Figure 58. Lund plate 1	258
Figure 59. Lund plate 2	260
Figure 60. The Lockarp plate	260
Figure 61. The Gyldensgård plate	261
Figure 62. The Deerness plate	264
Figure 63. Gorodišče plate 1	266
Figure 64. Gorodišče plate 2	266
Figure 65. The Ladoga plate	273

Tables

Table 1. Summary of the material	38
Table 2. Chronological distribution of the runic plates by country	39
Table 3. Find contexts of the runic plates.	40
Table 4. Typological distribution of the runic plates by place.	41
Table 5. Chronological distribution of the runic plates by content	42
Table 6. Lindquist's proposals for interpretation of the Kvinneby plate . . .	120
Table 7. Earlier interpretations of the Kvinneby plate	134
Table 8. Conventional runes.	294
Table 9. Conventional bind-runes.	296
Table 10. Balanced runes	296
Table 11. Unconventional bind-runes	297
Table 12. Older runes	297
Table 13. Additional cryptic runes (Rök runes)	297
Table 14. Coordinate runes (twig runes)	297
Table 15. Staveless runes	297
Table 16. Runes with non-graphematic branches.	298
Table 17. Unconventional unidentified runes (selection).	298
Table 18. Punctuation marks and swastikas.	298
Table 19. Personal names	300
Table 20. Other nouns	300
Table 21. Pronouns.	302
Table 22. Adjectives and present participles	303
Table 23. Adverbs	304
Table 24. Numbers (not arranged in alphabetical order)	304
Table 25. Verbs (incl. past participles).	304
Table 26. Prepositions, particles, articles and conjunctions.	306
Table 27. Interpreted runic plates in relation to findplaces	309
Table 28. Uninterpreted runic plates in relation to findplaces	310

Abbreviations

Cf. the list of abbreviations of archival institutions and bibliographical references on pp. 324–326.

†	(after runological signatures) lost
4to	quarto
A	runic plate of type A (pendant: with hole)
acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
B	runic plate of type B (non-pendant: without hole)
C	runic plate of type C (folded or rolled plate)
c.	circa
cf.	compare
chap.	chapter
col.	column
conj.	conjunction
dat.	dative
decl.	declension
def.	definite form
def. art.	definite article
dem. pron.	demonstrative pronoun
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> = for example
et al.	<i>et alii</i> = and others.
eV	early Viking Age (c. 700–950)
f.	feminine
f./ff.	(after page number) next page(s)
fn.	footnote
Fp	stylistic group Bird perspective (c. 1010–1050)
fr.	fragmentary runic plate
gen.	genitive
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> = in the same source
i.e.	<i>id est</i> = that is to say
imp.	imperative
ind.	indicative
inf.	infinitive
Lat.	Latin
IV	late Viking Age (c. 1050–1150)
m.	masculine
mV	mid-Viking Age (c. 950–1050)
n.	neuter
no.	number
nom.	nominative
OES	Old East Scandinavian
OEng.	Old English
OHG	Old High German
Oldcel.	Old Icelandic
OSax.	Old Saxon
OSw.	Old Swedish
OWS	Old West Scandinavian
p./pp.	page(s)

past part.	past participle
pers.	person (1, 2 and 3)
pers. comm.	personal communication
pers. pron.	personal pronoun
Pl.	plate
pl.	plural
poss. pron.	possessive pronoun
prep.	preposition
pres.	present
pres. ind.	present indicative
pres. part.	present participle
pres. subj.	present subjunctive
pret.	preterite
pret. ind.	preterite indicative
pret. part.	preterite participle
pret. subj.	preterite subjunctive
pron.	pronoun
Pr 1	stylistic group Head in profile 1 (c. 1010–1040)
Pr 2	stylistic group Head in profile 2 (c. 1020–1050)
Pr 3	stylistic group Head in profile 3 (c. 1050–1080)
Pr 4	stylistic group Head in profile 4 (c. 1070–1100)
Pr 5	stylistic group Head in profile 5 (c. 1100–1130)
r.	rune
rr.	runes
RAK	stylistic group RAK ('straight') (c. 800–1015)
refl.	reflexive
rel. pron.	relative pronoun
runSw.	runic Swedish
sg.	singular
SRD	Scandinavian Runic Text Database
stl.	staveless runes
Sw.	Swedish
v.	verb
V	Viking Age

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Vallentuna
Orthodox Easter 2019

Sonia Pereswetoff-Morath

1 Introduction and presentation of the material

goþr uar æin lutr
Góðr var einn hlutr.
‘This was a good amulet.’
N B91

1.1 Runic plates – an orientation

The topic of this dissertation was originally suggested to me by Professor Jurij Kuz'menko with the motivation that it would be interesting to discover how the inscriptions on the Viking-Age metal plates with runes which are here termed runic plates (see definition in section 1.7.1) should actually be interpreted. Does their language differ significantly from that found on the Viking-Age runestones and in this case in which way? Are there possibly peculiar or archaic features which do not occur on the runestones or which occur only to a lesser extent? It was however first when I started reading up on the subject that I discovered the extent of the uncertainty surrounding the runic plates from the Viking Age. It transpired that it would be impossible to carry out a comparative study of the linguistic forms on the Viking-Age runestones and runic plates, since it was almost always impossible to rely on the interpretations offered in the literature. The only point which emerged with some clarity was that these texts, according to their runological interpretations, were magic spells of some kind. This inspired the idea of undertaking an investigation to confirm the position of the plates in the runic material and function as a first step towards closer understanding of the language of the Viking-Age spells. The present dissertation is the result of this runological investigation.

A distribution map (Figure 1) of the 46 Viking-Age runic plates known today shows that the majority of these derive from Swedish territory. These 34 plates are marked on the map by triangles. Large triangles represent more than three plates from the same place while small ones represent one or two plates. The eight from Denmark (for historical reasons this includes Scania [Skåne]) are designated with circles while the non-Scandinavian plates are marked with squares (three from contemporary Russia, of which one square marks two, and one from the British Isles). The map could therefore possibly indicate that the runic plates spread from Sweden to Denmark and beyond

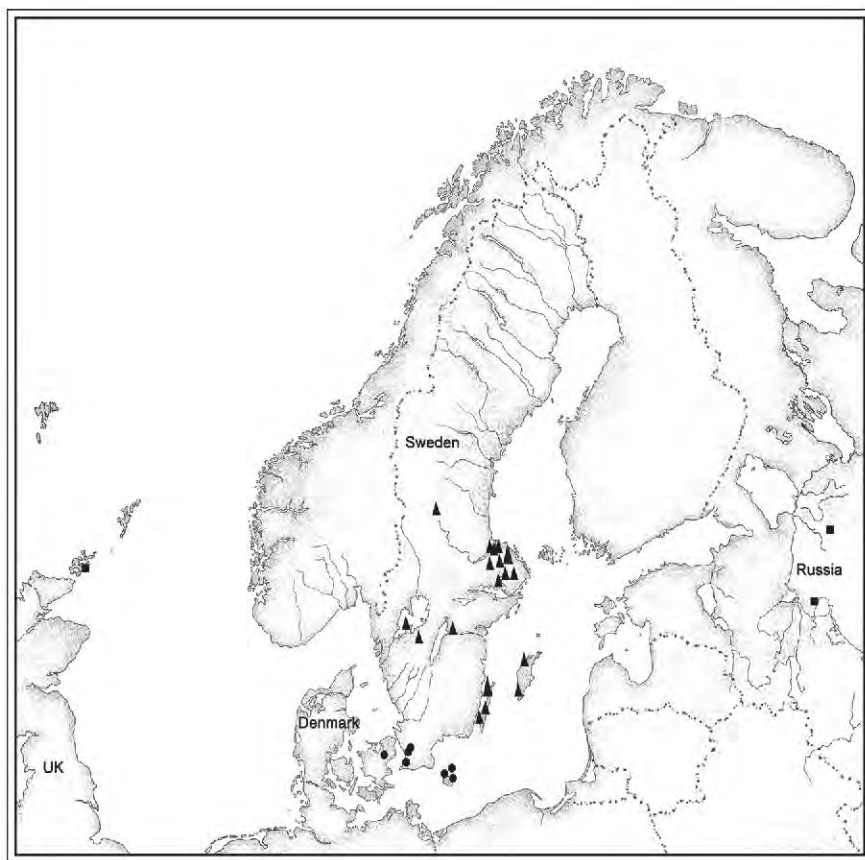


Figure 1. Distribution map of the Viking-Age runic plates. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina.

Scandinavia. I will discuss in section 1.12 whether this might have been the case.

Most of the Swedish runic plates, 18 to be precise, come from Uppland. Three of these are from the area around Birka (800–900s), six plates come from the Uppsala region (1000–1100s), two are from the Stockholm region (800–1000s), while Sigtuna is distinguished by its seven runic plates (1000–1100s – some however possibly younger). Six of the Upplandic plates are grave goods while the rest derive from residential areas or their origins are unknown. A long way from Uppland, we find a runic plate in a grave in Dalarna, which is probably the oldest runic find from this province (1000–1100s).

All nine runic plates from Öland come – apart from two grave plates from the tenth century – from residential areas and are dated to the eleventh century or later. Seven of these plates are from the Köpingsvik region. In comparison, the three runic plates from Gotland all derive from burial contexts and are older than most of the Öland plates. The southernmost Gotlandic plate is also the old-

est in the corpus and has been dated to the first half of the eighth century. Lastly, among the Swedish plates are found two from Västergötland and one from Skänninge in Östergötland.

Of the 34 Swedish runic plates, 22 lack a linguistic interpretation while 12 have been interpreted. This does not permit the conclusion that the majority of Swedish plates are non-linguistic (see section 8.4). Five of the interpreted plates have suspension holes; the rest are fragmentary or lack holes. The five interpreted plates with holes form a distinctive group as they are relatively large with comparably long inscriptions which in their turn have often been interpreted in two or more ways. This is not the case with the seven interpreted runic plates lacking holes: they are smaller in size and as a rule no more than one or possibly two interpretations of their inscriptions have been proposed.

All eight Danish plates belong to the later part of the Viking Age and can be dated to c. 1050–1100; only half of them have been interpreted and only one incontrovertibly comes from a grave. Three of the Danish plates are pendants while the rest are fragmentary or lack holes. As regards geographical distribution, one plate was found on Sjælland (Zealand) in 1866; this was the first find of its type, with this kind of object previously unknown. Three runic plates come from Bornholm, and the material of one of these is unique as it is the only silver plate in the corpus. Two plates are from Lund and one from Uppåkra. The remaining plate comes from Lockarp, near Malmö.

The four non-Scandinavian runic plates are unique in many ways while simultaneously clearly belonging in the corpus. All four of them are pendants, and closest typologically – but also in content – to the plates from Uppland, particularly the oldest plate from the Birka area. One of them comes from Deerness Brough on Orkney (Scotland, 1000–1100s) while three are from contemporary Russia (900s): Staraja Ladoga (‘Old Ladoga’) and Rjurikovo Gorodišče (‘Rurik’s Old Town’, now within the borders of Velikij Novgorod). All of them thus derive from areas with very strong Nordic connections.

The runic plates are presented in more detail in section 1.11.

1.2 Literature review

The runic plates comprise a late addition to the runic material from an academic perspective. The first find was made, as noted above, in 1866 (the Roskilde plate, Denmark), and the next did not come to light until more than half a century had passed, in 1920 (the Högstena plate, Västergötland). Over the following 95 years a further 44 Viking-Age runic plates and around twice as many mediaeval ones have been found. The most recent discoveries were

made during the years I was working on this dissertation.¹ The focus in this work is on the 46 Viking-Age runic plates. The text will discuss earlier scholarship in the separate sections dealing with the individual plates, so only the general research will be presented here.

Both Viking-Age and mediaeval runic plates have aroused great interest within runological circles. Since Viking-Age runic plates have been considered by many to be amulets (see the definition on p. 31), they have usually been treated together with other runic amulets. My overview of research into runic plates will therefore of necessity also include some research into runic amulets.

The earliest discoveries of Viking-Age Scandinavian runic plates were described in the geographically arranged corpus editions (e.g. DR 246 the Roskilde plate, G 261 the Gällungs plate, G 361 the Hallbjäns plate and Vg 216 the Högstena plate), and later finds were reported in *Fornvännen* and *Nytt om Runer (NOR)* as well as in diverse individual articles and monographs. Finds from Denmark are now usually published digitally in the Danish database of runic inscriptions (see ‘DK’ under internet sources), while the Swedish ones are published on the home page of RAÄ (see ‘Samla’ under internet sources).

As regards Denmark, where almost exclusively mediaeval Christian runic amulets have been found, special mention must be made of Marie Stoklund, who has reported on Danish runic plates in several publications (incl. 2000, 2003). Viking-Age Swedish runic plates are discussed in articles and monographs by e.g. Ivar Lindquist (1932, 1936, 1987), Arthur Nordén (1943), Hugo Jungner (1936), Elisabeth Svärdström (1967, 1969a), Helmer Gustavson (e.g. 1969, 1984, 1994a, 2002b, 2004, 2009a etc.) and Magnus Källström (1998, 2013b, 2014b, 2014c etc.). The two most recent articles on Swedish runic plates were published in connection with new finds from Sigtuna (Gustavson & Källström 2016) and in relation to new interpretations of plates found earlier (Gustavson 2017). The Russian runic plates have been investigated and interpreted by only three scholars, of whom I am one (Kuz’menko 1997b; Mel’nikova 2001; Steblin-Kamenskaja 2013). New, more comprehensive investigations in this area include Fanny Agåker’s archaeological master’s thesis *Runic plates. Products of Cultural Fusion in Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavia* (2010) and Rikke Steenholt Olesen’s dissertation on mediaeval runic inscriptions *Fra biarghrúnar til Ave sanctissima Maria* (2007:72–149) as well as an article by the same scholar (2010).

Runic plates have thus been studied since the beginning of last century, although mainly in journal articles or smaller sections of more comprehensive works. Over the last thirty years, however, more runic plates (both Viking-Age and mediaeval) have been found than ever before, contributing to the reawakening of interest in magic objects. This has thus far resulted in the

¹ In 2012, for example, a plate was found in Sunnerby (Västergötland) and two copper plates in Old Uppsala. Three further copper plates were found in 2014 in Sigtuna.

publication of two monographs: *Runes, Magic and Religion: A Sourcebook* (McKinnell et al. 2004) and *Runic Amulets and Magic Objects* (MacLeod & Mees 2006). The first work provides overviews of the magical runic material but without proper analysis of the readings, orthography, morphology, lexicon or syntax. It should also be observed that the material in the monograph is often compiled somewhat haphazardly with little control of the quality of the interpretations (an example is provided in section 7.2.2.2, where I show how McKinnell et al. misunderstand the interpretations of the Ladoga plate). There is a subsequent risk of scholars outside the field of runology accepting somewhat unreliable information.² The second work, by MacLeod & Mees (2006), has also been criticised for significant deficiencies, e.g. its linguistic analysis. Michael Schulte (2007:81) describes it as “a cursory and uncritical reading of several runic inscriptions with arbitrary linguistic analyses”, concluding that “the linguistic part of the work does not stand close scrutiny” and noting that the authors’ source of the interpretations is often the unreliable monograph by McKinnell et al. 2004: “Nowhere is it indicated which interpretations the individual analyses are based on. When scrutinizing the authors’ working methods, the impression arises that McKinnell and Simek 2004 – a fairly uncritical compilation of ‘magic’ runic inscriptions written by non-runologists – is their basic source.”

To date, readings and interpretations have been suggested for 19 runic plates, sometimes with several diverse interpretations of the same inscription. The 27 runic plates which have not been linguistically interpreted have nonetheless often been considered to bear magical inscriptions. (Thorgunn Snædal, for example writes [in *GR* 3, G 261] that Gällungs plates 1 och 2 constitute pagan magic.) Research into runic plates is thus still strongly associated with ideas of runic magic – a paradigm which, if one excludes the last fifty years, has dominated runology and which relies on the idea that runic characters can be inherently magic and at the time of their carving could be considered not only as units in a system of writing but also as magical signs or symbols. The extensive belief in magical explanations found in the earlier scholarship has nonetheless been revised (e.g. in Bæksted 1952), so that increasing numbers of modern researchers are instead rather sceptical of the view of runes as magic signs (e.g. Barnes 2012:143;³ the historiography of the subject is dis-

² One of the latest examples occurs in an article by Debora Moretti (2015:106), where the author, referencing McKinnell et al. (2004:155), observes that lead plates with the word *agla* “are quite unusual because they appear not to have been worn but rather to have been deposited in the foundations of buildings to prevent fire”. Such a conclusion is premature, since lead plates are often discovered with the help of metal detectors and therefore lack a more precise archaeological context. Lead plates with the word *agla* are, moreover, also found in graves, e.g. one from Skänninge with a runic inscription in both Latin and runic Swedish (Källström 2017a).

³ In the words of Michael Barnes (2012:143): “Runes are an alphabetical form of writing, no more, no less. To associate them with the supernatural is to pervert the evidence. There is no more justification for considering runes magic symbols than the characters of the roman, greek or cyrillic alphabets.”

cussed further in Barnes 2012:207 f.) and strongly doubt that runes ever had such a function. Inscriptions which are difficult to understand, with for example unreadable or unconventional runes, repetitions of runes, or runic sequences devoid of linguistic meaning, are commonly regarded by these scholars as the work of inexperienced carvers. The runic plates which comprise my corpus should nevertheless be considered magic objects (see the definition in section 1.7.1 below) and I will therefore briefly discuss the extent to which runes on plates can be regarded as magic writing symbols (section 8.5).

Preliminary publication of several of the most recent finds can be considered as a weakness of existing research into runic plates. This has often occurred before the find has been adequately cleaned and conserved, and the resulting readings must consequently be regarded with caution. As already observed, the earliest finds often attracted several different interpretations (e.g. the plates from Högstena, Sigtuna and Kvinneby), resulting in difficulties for scholars in choosing the most reliable interpretation. Several variants must therefore often be considered, as for example in McKinnell et al. (2004) and MacLeod & Mees (2006). A further deficiency is that most of the runic plates are the subject of individual articles: no work has ever analysed them as a corpus. We do have Arthur Nordén's 1943 article, where he collects and describes all the magical runic inscriptions known to him, with runic plates assigned their own section (pp. 143–188). Nordén's corpus nonetheless comprised only ten runic plates. Ivar Lindquist (1987:7 f.) had plans for a monograph on runic amulets although these were never realised. Without such a cohesive corpus it is however all but impossible to obtain an overall impression of the material to be used for comparative studies. The need for a complete collection of this kind can thus hardly be denied. The Viking-Age runic plates lie beyond the usual scope of runology in other ways too, possibly as a consequence of their lack of inclusion in the database of runic inscriptions on which Lena Peterson's *Svenskt runordsregister* (2006) is based. Moreover, a browse through the *Runrön* series (currently 20 volumes) shows that they are mentioned only a handful of times⁴ and that they are often not included where one might have expected them to be. A happier problem is that new runic plates are continually being discovered, primarily as a consequence of archaeological investigations and metal detecting. The number of Viking-Age runic plates may increase significantly within just a few decades: as a consequence, my statistics will rapidly become obsolete. I hope nonetheless that my dissertation will not date as quickly in regard to its methodology and interpretations.

⁴ e.g. Sigtuna plate 1 (Peterson 1994:241; Bianchi 2010:145), the Ladoga plate (Larsson 2002:38; Bianchi 2010:202), Gorodišče plates 1 and 2 (MacLeod 2002:172 f.; Bianchi 2010:145), the Kvinneby plate (MacLeod 2002:169–173), the Hovgård plate (Bianchi 2010:202), the Hallbjäns plate (Snædal 2002:43 f.) and Sigtuna plate 2 (Bianchi 2010:145).

The small size of the objects (c. 5 cm long on average) poses a great problem for their study. Unfortunately, they often tend to disappear in museum collections, or their inscriptions to wear away to a far greater extent than those on runestones. I was unable to examine two of the plates which comprise part of the corpus as they could not be found in collections.

1.3 Working hypothesis

My working hypothesis assumes that the inscriptions on the different runic plates belong to the same genre and can therefore be placed in a single corpus and investigated using the same methods. My definition of the concept of genre is borrowed from Per Lagerholm (2008:56): “Genre is a part of an activity with a given function and definite goals, and this activity includes producing texts, spoken or written, as a stage in achieving these goals.”⁵ Pragmatically, runic plates can easily be divided into two groups consisting of those with linguistic interpretations and those still lacking them. In both cases, however, the inscriptions on the plates are considered magical. If we choose to consider the inscriptions on the plates as magical, this relates to an activity which includes the production of spoken or written texts, the goal of which is to influence the environment via these texts, as well as by other means. Here too we approach the definition of genre proposed by Per Ledin (2001:26): “A genre links texts to a recurring social process where people act collectively via texts.”⁶ It is taken for granted that runic plates, understood in this way, comprise one stage of a social process – in a transmission of magical power from the experienced magician to someone who is perhaps unskilled in magic but who seeks supernatural help. The relevant genre is *magic spells*.

1.4 Scandinavian spells

The Scandinavian spells, following the model of Ferdinand Ohrt (1917:9–13), can be divided into four categories (cf. also af Klintberg 1988:39–57 and Bø 1974:677): 1) exhortative spells, 2) ritual spells, 3) epic spells and 4) secret spells. All four types can also be labelled *incantations*.

The first group is the most common (af Klintberg 1988:39 f.) and most often consists of incantations in the first person with commands or requests addressed to supernatural powers and/or the recipient of the text; these addressees are explicitly named. The magical idea underlying such formulas is

⁵ “Genren är en del av en verksamhet med en given funktion och bestämda mål, och i denna verksamhet ingår att producera texter, talade eller skrivna, som ett led i att uppnå sina mål.”

⁶ “En genre kopplar texter till en återkommande social process där människor samhandlar genom texter.”

based on the belief that a creature or person can be coerced through knowledge of its name. Such spells usually name the supernatural powers which are supposed to be driven off (e.g. demons of sickness) or to offer help (e.g. divinities). They are usually summoned by direct appeal, and these formulas often use the number three to increase the power of the invocation.

The second group comprises spells which describe ritual actions as they are performed. The account of ritual spells by af Klintberg (p. 44) is of particular interest as it both emphasises the great age of this type of spell and explains why it is sparsely attested:

It is perhaps the most common of all the spell-types, but also the most linguistically unsophisticated. It is very seldom given a particular formation. [- - -] One may presume that the type was found in Sweden in prehistoric times, although its unassuming form rendered it unworthy of documentation. There are several examples of it in Icelandic poetry, including in the saga of Egil Skallagrimson, when Egil erects a pole of shame and says: Here I set up a pole of shame and direct this shame to King Erik. It is extremely common in malevolent magic: at the same time as one struck a knife in a path, hit a nail into a painted eye, buried the hair or nails of one's enemy, tied a sprig into a knot or similar, one mumbled in concise words the aim of this magic.⁷

The third group contains spells which are based on tales of historic or mythic events. The spells in this group can also be labelled *analogy spells*. This type is also ancient and is attested in Europe from the third century (af Klintberg 1988:45). Famous examples of this type are the Merseburg charms, two magic spells in Old High German which were recorded in the tenth century in a somewhat older manuscript (Lundgreen & Beck 2001:601–605). Presumably underlying this type is the conviction that a narrative about a person with magical powers (a god, saint or demon) and 'experiences' from analogous events can transmit magical power to the recipient of the spell.

Finally, *secret spells* are described by Bengt af Klintberg (1988:52) as follows: "Secret spells are in a class of their own: the incomprehensible signs, alphabet sequences and magic words. They also diverge from the other spells in rarely occurring in oral tradition but almost exclusively in written form as amulets and written messages."⁸ This group thus comprises words which have lost their original meaning as well as symbols and alphabetic sequences which never had any lexical meaning. The Scandinavian runic material could also

⁷ "Det är kanske den vanligaste av alla formeltyper, men också den konstlösaste i språkligt avseende. Mycket sällan har den kostats på en bunden form. [- - -] Man kan förutsätta att typen funnits i Sverige i uråldriga tider, fastän den genom sin anspråkslösa form inte ansetts värd att dokumenteras. I den isländska diktningen finner man flera exempel på den, bl.a. i Egil Skallagrimsons saga, när Egil reser en nidstav och säger: Här sätter jag upp en nidstav och riktar detta nid mot kung Erik. I skademagin är den utomordentligt vanlig: samtidigt som man högg kniven i ett spår, slog spik i ett målat öga, grävde ner hår eller naglar av sin motståndare, slog knut på en trädgren e.d. så mumlade man i korta ord avsikten med sin trollkonst."

⁸ "Helt för sig själv står lönnformlerna: de obegripliga tecknen, bokstavsserierna och trollorden. De skiljer sig från de övriga trollformlerna även däri att de sällan levtt i muntlig tradition utan nästan uteslutande förekommit i skriftlig form som amuletter och formellappar."

include futhark inscriptions, palindromes, sequences of repeated runes and rune-like signs. In my opinion, encrypted lexical inscriptions should not, however, be included in this group. The label *secret spell* does in fact seem less applicable to the runic material, where one might easily be persuaded that all of the inscriptions with secret runes should be included in this group. Secret runes can however be used in lexical inscriptions with, for example, exhortative or ritual content. We shall later be able to confirm that secret spells are strikingly absent from the Viking-Age plates: there we encounter neither palindromes nor futhark inscriptions, and different and more convincing interpretations can be offered for the repeated runic sequences than the representation of magical secret spells. Such spells were brought from the Continent by those with knowledge – direct or indirect – of ancient and Oriental magical tradition. They contain prayers and magic words originating in these traditions, such as the *agla* and *sator* formulas, *abracadabra* and so on. Here belong also Christian prayers in Latin, Christian symbols and holy names “which from the beginning had an official position acknowledged by the Church which then degenerated through wider public use to end up in the hiding places of the Black Arts”⁹ (af Klintberg 1988:53). This particular group of texts became very popular during the Middle Ages and virtually dominant on the mediaeval runic plates.

There is, according to af Klintberg (1988:39), a significant distinction between type 1 (exhortative spells) on the one hand and types 2 and 3 (ritual and epic spells) on the other. The difference is that type 1 is ‘subjective’ while types 2 and 3 are ‘objective’. The first, exhortative group most often consists, as previously mentioned, of spells in the first person which express the subjective act of will of the executor; they are directly addressed to supernatural creatures (with a command/supplication) as well as to the recipient of the incantation. Types 2 and 3 may be called objective as they most often consist of analogical narratives which work through sympathetic magic. Type 4 stands somewhat alone, as noted above. The four types seldom occur in such pure forms, however: concrete formulations often combine exhortative and ritual phrases or consist of analogy tales which conclude with exhortative words and perhaps obscure symbols. The dramatic heartbeat of the spells is often the oscillation between these different types.

Which of these types are found in my material? Only a thorough runological investigation can answer this question. This will in all probability lead to new proposals for reading and interpreting the material, and interpretation of the inscription will in its turn permit its classification according to type.

I warmly direct readers who wish to learn more about the sociological context of the spells, e.g. the particular sickness demons being driven off or the

⁹ “som från början haft en officiell och av kyrkan godkänd ställning men sedan sjunkit ner genom folklagren och hamnat i svartkonstens gömmor”

epic concepts underlying these, as well as readers generally interested in the tradition of magic spells in Scandinavia, to the excellent introductions to the subject by Bengt af Klintberg (1988:7–63), Ferdinand Ohrt (1917:1–58) and Olav Bø (1974:674–678). My work discusses only those inscriptions on Viking-Age plates and its aim is to read and interpret these in order to create a more solid foundation for future, more comprehensive investigations of the history and character of Scandinavian magic spells.

1.5 Disposition and aim of the dissertation

This dissertation is intended as a monograph covering all of the Viking-Age runic plates known to date. The aim is to read and interpret as far as possible the inscriptions on the runic plates to provide as clear as possible a picture of the genre of ‘Viking-Age runic plates’.

The dissertation consists of eight chapters, five of which are empirical and based on the reading reports in the catalogue (see more on this below). The chapters consider the runic plates geographically (Swedish, Danish and non-Scandinavian objects), in terms of content (interpreted and uninterpreted inscriptions) and typologically. I choose to consider the Swedish runic plates first, since the earliest runic plates (700–900s) have been found in Sweden while all the Danish plates date from the 1000–1100s. In this way the presentation approaches a chronological review, which facilitates understanding of the development of each inscriptional type. The fact that the runic plates found outside Scandinavia are discussed in a separate chapter should not be taken to signify that they belong neither typographically nor as regards content with the Swedish or Danish ones: they do. They have nonetheless been placed in a third section as a matter of technique, after the more systematic review of the Swedish and Danish plates, to allow for their comparison with material which has a clearer historical context. I discuss in greatest detail those runic plates which have attracted several different interpretations, while runic plates lacking interpretations are described more briefly. The chapter on Swedish A-type runic plates incorporates parts of my C-essay which was written in Stockholm in 2009 under the supervision of the late Professor Rune Palm. The main text of the dissertation contains an introduction (Chap. 1) and summary (Chap. 8) recording all certain rune-forms, words and names. A final summary and Appendix 1 conclude the work. The appendix lists all the runic plates alphabetically and provides relevant supplementary information.

The dissertation is complemented by a digital catalogue <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-383584>>. The catalogue provides transliterations of the inscriptions on the runic plates and reading reports on the plates I have examined. It also provides rich photographic material. The catalogue,

which is only available in Swedish, is ordered alphabetically by geography (country and province).

Appendix 1 links the catalogue to the main text and provides references to the pages in the main text and in the catalogue where a particular plate is discussed.

1.6 Labelling and presentation of the material

The dissertation provides a name for each runic plate: this is usually based on the name of the place closest to its findspot. I do not however change the name if it has become established in the literature (e.g. the Østermarie plate). For the sake of clarity, I generally employ these names rather than the runological signatures. These can easily be found in Appendix 1 in this book; they are also provided in the main text discussing the relevant plate.

The signatures which I use are those found in the database of Scandinavian runic inscriptions, *Samnordisk runtextdatabas* (henceforth SRD). Runic signatures consist of an abbreviation of the corpus edition (DR, U, Vg, Öl etc.) or publication ([U] Fv, [DR] NOR, [Öl] SAS [Öl] BN etc.) which describes the relevant object; this is followed by a number which is either the number given to the inscription in the corpus edition (e.g. G 261) or publication (Öl BN83) or the year and page of the publication (U FV1933;34). Explanations of all the signatures are found in the references but SRD can also be consulted. A cross (†) following the signature means that the object bearing the inscription has been lost. Further abbreviations used in the main text and in Appendix 1 in this book which do not refer to the sources are recorded in the List of Abbreviations.

Several dictionaries have been used in this dissertation, all of which can be found in the reference list. In my discussions of a word where only the name of the dictionary is provided (e.g. *Lexicon Poeticum*, *Norrøn ordbok* or *SAOB*) or the name of its compilers (e.g. Fritzner or Söderwall), the word in question is the headword in the relevant dictionary. When I cite Fritzner, I change the initial capital of the noun to lower case. In some isolated instances I make use of unpublished material from the Antiquarian and Topographic Archives of the Swedish National Heritage Board (ATA) and the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research in Uppsala (DFU). In these cases I adhere to the method of the institution for referencing the material.

1.7 Terminology

The most frequent terms and concepts used in the main text and the catalogue are discussed in the following.

1.7.1 General terms

Runic plate is a general term for a large variety of portable objects. Common to these objects is that they are made of metal, are functionally flat, i.e. have only two writing surfaces, and contain runes (or rune-like lines). Since the term is so generally employed, I will further delimit it for the purpose of this dissertation. Runic plates included in my corpus should adhere to the definition given above, but they should not have had clear everyday functions: a more typologically homogenous group of portable objects is thus achieved. This means that if the object in question is a coin or a mount or fitting, it will not be included in the corpus, even if it could in principle be regarded as a runic plate. The corpus comprises objects given many different designations in diverse databases (e.g. SHM's digital catalogue, SRD, DK or RAÄ's FMIS, also known as *Fornsök*). The terms *amulett* ('amulet'), *hänge* ('pendant'), *platta* ('plaque'), *remsa* ('strip'), *bronsbit* ('bronze piece') are the most common in these databases.

Typologically, I divide the runic plates into three groups:

Type A: pendants with suspension holes which are not folded or rolled;

Type B: plates without holes which are not folded or rolled;

Type C: folded or rolled plates (these include pendants and other objects).

This typology is a simplified version of the one proposed by Fanny Agåker (2010:26 f.). A different typological division of the material could have been made, and it may be discussed whether type C merits treatment as a specific type as it could have been considered a subtype of types A or B respectively. The separation of these three types does provide some advantages in presentation technique; I wish nevertheless to emphasise that type C is less self-contained than types A and B.

The ends of a number of plates in the corpus have been broken off, meaning they cannot be classified by type with any measure of certainty. They are all labelled as fragmentary. There are however some fragmentary plates which can nevertheless be classified since a suspension hole or traces of folding remain. These are then classified as type A or C respectively.

One may question whether all the runic plates should be labelled as amulets. The term *amulet* itself is a rather general one, including many different types of objects with protective and apotropaic function which can be carried close to the body (pearls, small stones, sticks, bits of bone, metal plates, bear teeth and so on). The problem with runic plates as a category is that their protective function can be confirmed only by interpretation of the inscription and by the type of the object. If the plate in question belongs to type A and if its inscription is clearly directed against some form of evil and contains protective words, it is unproblematic to call it an *amulet*. If however the inscription on the plate cannot be interpreted, or if the interpretation indicates that the function was to harm someone, for example, or if the shape does not suggest

that the object was intended to be carried on the body, it is not correct to call it an *amulet*. I therefore generally avoid applying this term to the runic plates although its use may be required if the object in question corresponds to one or more of the aforementioned criteria for amulets. What should however be assured is that all of the runic plates, as I delimit the term, in the corpus can be designated as magical objects.

The term *magical object* also requires a brief definition. I generally avoid discussions of *magic* in my work since the aim of the dissertation is purely linguistic and philological. My material is nonetheless comprised of objects which must have had a magical function and for this reason a definition of magic is required. *Magic*, described by Raudvere (1993:174) as “a hidden threat in everyday life”,¹⁰ is a general term covering everything associated with the supernatural. A magical object is thus an object which constitutes a link in the transmission of supernatural powers from a sender to a receiver. The aim of this transfer may be to heal or harm, and the carving of runes may at the same time have involved multiple processes such as ritual actions or spoken words. The term *magic spell* may in this context be defined as spoken or written words or signs which constitute a link in the transmission of supernatural powers from a sender to a receiver.

1.7.2 Runological terms

A further two words which comprise part of the title of the dissertation require definition, i.e. *reading* and *interpretation*. *Reading* refers here to the identification and transliteration of an inscription's runes followed by a reading report or at least a commentary. By *interpretation* is meant a normalisation of the relevant inscription to Old Scandinavian (the dominant language of the Scandinavian countries c. 725–1100) as well as a translation of this to a modern language. Normalisation and translation are followed by a linguistic commentary. If the inscription is normalised and translated with no linguistic commentary, I speak instead of someone's *understanding* of the inscription. Sometimes one (or more) author(s) combine two or more interpretations and present these as a normalisation and translation without commentary. I do not call these *interpretations* but *contaminations*.

Transliteration here refers to the replacement of runes by Latin letters. See the introduction to the catalogue for details on the principles of transliteration and numbering as well as for additional runographic terms. By *normalisation* is meant an interpretation which has been normalised to the ancient language in which the relevant inscription may be regarded as being composed. Normalisations to runic Danish, runic Swedish (or in some cases Old Swedish) and Old Icelandic occur in the dissertation. I normalise my

¹⁰ “ett dolt hot i vardagen”

own interpretations to runic Danish for the Danish plates and runic Swedish for the Swedish and Russian plates. My normalisations to runic Swedish are based on Peterson's *Runordsregister*, and I apply the method of normalisation used there. My normalisations to runic Danish are based on the section *Transskriptioner* in *DRI* 1 (1942:597–619) but add vowel length. In the glossary in Chapter 8, I normalise all words to runic Scandinavian for the sake of clarity. Normalisations are always recorded in cursive. In referring to or discussing the interpretations of other scholars, I use their normalisations even if these do not agree with how I choose to normalise the inscription. The use of square brackets in normalisations indicates that the enclosed sounds or words are reconstructed or supplemented from older sources. Round brackets are used to indicate that sounds or words have been omitted. I try to use such markings sparingly.

The reading order of the runes on the plates is usually provided in a discussion of the reading. I label this *straightforward* if the runes run from left to right (and downwards from the top or upwards from the base). The reading order is *reversed* if the runes run from right to left. Another common method of carving runes on plates is in so-called *boustrophedon*, “following the turns of ploughing oxen”¹¹ (*NE*). Here each new row is turned 180 degrees in relation to the preceding one. The runes in the first row in boustrophedon usually run from left to right, and the reading can proceed downwards from the top (the Kvinneby plate), upwards from the bottom (Sigtuna plate 1) or in spirals (the Østermarie plate).

The runes on the plates can be loosely divided into *conventional* and *unconventional*. Conventional runes are long-branch and short-twig runes. Unconventional runes are cryptic runes or rune-like signs. Cryptic runes in their turn can be identified as staveless runes,¹² coordinate runes, balanced runes,¹³ unconventional bind-runes, older runes, or runes with non-graphematic branches. *Rune-like signs* designate signs which cannot be identified as coordinate runes, balanced runes etc. I discuss these terms in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.8 Dating

All of the runic inscriptions named or discussed in this work (i.e. not only the runic plates) have been dated with the help of information in the reference literature. The inscriptions may have been dated runologically or archaeologically.

¹¹ “efter vändningen av plöjande oxar”

¹² It is essentially axiomatic in this work that the staveless runes of the runic plates are treated as unconventional and cryptic (see the discussion in Fridell 2011:83 f.), *pace* Barnes (2012:144) who claims that staveless runes “can hardly count as [cryptic]”.

¹³ I have introduced this term to designate runes of certain types. It includes those runes which are usually termed mirror runes: see section 2.6 for more detail.

Runological dating is usually based on runic forms (runographic dating) and language. I amend the runological dating of some runic plates but in most cases I accept the dating provided in the runological literature. The Viking-Age runic plates with a narrow range of dating can be schematically divided into three time frames: Early Viking Age (750–950), Mid Viking Age (950–1050) and Late Viking Age (1050–1150). If a runic plate is dated broadly to the tenth century, it is counted with the Early Viking-Age plates; if it is broadly dated to the eleventh century, it is classified as Mid Viking Age; if dated 1000–1100s, it is placed in the Late Viking Age. This third group (1050–1150) is outside the historical time frame of the Viking Age but can be justified because the use of runes remained Viking-Age even beyond 1050, gradually yielding to mediaeval usage from the mid-twelfth century. Viking-Age and mediaeval runic practices are distinguished by the use of different alphabets for carving: the 16-character Viking-Age or the mediaeval runic alphabet which is based on the Latin alphabet in the number of signs and their order.

The extent to which this division into three groups can be justified may be discussed: the runic plates which can incontrovertibly be dated to the Mid Viking Age (950–1050) are so few (7 in total) that it may have been simpler to separate the corpus into two groups with a division at around A.D. 1000. I nonetheless believe that the tripartite division provides a clearer picture of the distribution of the runic plates in time and area.

I reproduce the archaeological datings unchanged. One particular group of stylistic datings is based on the ornamentation of the runestones, using the typology of Anne-Sofie Gräslund (for this, see most recently Gräslund 2006). These may be relevant for my comparative material. The stylistic groups in this typology are usually abbreviated and dated as follows: Fp (c. 1010–1050), Pr 1 (c. 1010–1040), Pr 2 (c. 1020–1050), Pr 3 (c. 1050–1080), Pr 4 (c. 1070–1100) and Pr 5 (c. 1100–1130). Further discussion of these datings is unnecessary for my purposes although I am aware of the weaknesses in Gräslund's construction, primarily the dating of the stylistic groups Pr 1–3 and overlaps between these. For detailed discussions, see Magnus Källström (2007a:68–75) and Cecilia Ljung (2016:33–35).

Sometimes the stylistic group RAK is listed, meaning the stone in question lacks ornamentation. Such runestones usually belong to the older examples but there are exceptions, primarily in Uppland (Källström 1998:11, 1999:13 and 2007a:65 f.). I therefore record this stylistic group only if I have confirmed that the relevant stone belongs to the older examples (c. 800–1015). I make no use of the stylistic group Kb (Crossband-stones), since its dating to 1000–1050 is questionable (Källström 2007a:67–69).

1.9 Reading and interpretational methodology

My aims require first a critical appraisal of the readings and interpretations of the runic plates offered to date. New readings and interpretations result from this assessment. I do not however adopt any new methods but work with traditional runological tools when establishing new readings or proposing new interpretations. What may distinguish my methods from those of earlier scholars is the stringency with which I apply them. The section on Terminology in the catalogue, where I discuss the runological and runographic terms employed in the main text and catalogue, may also be accounted a further refinement of my methods of reading and interpreting.

I have examined the runic plates myself in order to confirm the readings. The aim was for this to occur several times (two to four) and on several different occasions, always using a stereomicroscope with moveable lighting. I document the plates not only in notes and drawings but also via photographs magnified by 2, 4 and 6. I examined and photographed most of the runic plates through the stereomicroscope.¹⁴ None of the photographs used in the catalogue has been altered in any way: neither resolution, colour nor shadow has been adjusted. I decided to allow no enhancements since with modern technology it is particularly easy to change photographs to show what one wants others to see. The catalogue and main text also include illustrations by Ksenia Dubrovina based on my drawings and photographs.

An important part of the reading method is the review of comparative material, which is discussed in Chapter 2. I made this review in order to produce more reliable readings of difficult runic plates with unconventional runes. I also made a phonographematic analysis of one of the runic plates with unconventional runes (the Ladoga plate, see Appendix 1 in the catalogue). This method proved excessively time-consuming and the result was not found to be significantly more reliable, despite its supporting my reading on two or three points. I have therefore not applied this method to other runic plates.

In my critical appraisal of the plate interpretations, I attempt to establish the interpretational methodology employed by the scholar in question and to deduce whether it can be expected to produce reliable results. I thus discuss the strong and weak points of the methodology in question. I further consider the interpretations which have become accepted in runic research and attempt to verify these. I check the meanings of words not only in dictionaries but also in many cases in the sources cited in the dictionaries. This is done in an attempt to establish the meaning of the individual words in the specific sources.

In older runology, there was less awareness of methodology, and the methods

¹⁴ I have examined 41 of the 46 runic plates known today (the number of times each plate was examined is recorded in Appendix 1). Two of the remaining five could not be found in the collections (Lund plate 2 and the Östra Aros plate). I judged the inscriptions on the remaining plates, from Skänninge, Sunnerby and Lockarp, to be so clearly carved and the available photographs so magnified that there was less need for independent examination.

applied by scholars are seldom mentioned explicitly although they may be glimpsed. Thus, for example, Nordén (1943:185) writes about Vassunda plate 3: “One seems to perceive the remnants of a genuinely meaningful text and is inclined to allow the carver a wide margin for spelling errors, abbreviations and intentional cryptography.”¹⁵ Such a method cannot be considered reliable. It may be generally stated that there are often two deficiencies in older methods of interpretation: firstly, preconceived notions about the content of the inscription were given more or less free reign and secondly, the interpretation was allowed to govern the reading. The first deficiency occurs most often when comparing with inscriptions on similar objects or with similar texts: investigators had a natural tendency to latch onto a known example and proceed on this basis in the process of interpretation. There are many clear examples of this in my material, see e.g. section 3.2.2. The second deficiency is harder to avoid and the stringency with which the reading is achieved is paramount here.

I thus attempt to answer the following questions when I analyse the interpretations of other scholars: Which methods were employed in the process of interpretation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these methods? How are dictionaries used and where do the translations come from? How is the interpretation presented? What argument is used and what proof is offered? (Cf. Barnes [1994b:11–29] on different types of weakness in argumentation.)

When I offer a new interpretation, I aim to apply the usual linguistic and philological methods but with greater stringency than has often been the case. I recognise less possibility of carving errors, abbreviated words and such than has been usual in earlier research, and I attempt as far as possible to avoid these entirely. I also fixate less on similar texts or inscriptions on similar objects so that I am not influenced by these but can instead consider each inscription with a descriptively philological eye (for this term see Bäckvall 2013:48 f.).

I propose an interpretation only when the process of reading has been concluded in order to minimise the influence exerted by the interpretation on the reading. I further attempt to always support my interpretation in the internal context of writing (inner support), i.e. in the inscription itself, and only later in the external context (outer support). I also attempt to avoid proposing an interpretation if the reading is too uncertain. In a number of cases I nevertheless abstain from this principle and present suggestions for interpretation, well aware that they are problematic due to the readings not being fully established (cf. section 7.2.2.3). I have only one purpose here, to pave the way for future attempts at interpretation. In these cases I attempt as far as possible to restrict myself to a lexical level and abstain from complete interpretations. This is the case, for example, with the Deerness plate and the Ladoga plate, and it is specifically mentioned each time. I am quite aware of the risk scholars take in presenting problematic suggestions for interpretation. The danger is that

¹⁵ “Man tycker sig skymta brottstycken av en verkligt meningsfylld text och blir benägen att lämna ristaren en bred marginal för stavfel, förkortningar och avsiktlig kryptografi.”

readers from non-linguistic backgrounds will use the suggestions as certainties despite all of my reservations. I nonetheless agree entirely with Lena Peterson (1997), who discusses the problem at length in her article ‘Tolkaren och texten, texten och tolkaren’ [‘The interpreter and the text, the text and the interpreter’], that this is a necessary step on the path to better and more reliable interpretations. I refer to this article in its entirety for an in-depth discussion and wish to conclude with the author’s response to the advice of Michael Barnes to abstain from the interpretation of certain inscriptions (p. 147):

The big question I now want to pose is: When should we give up? Isn’t it our duty as linguistic researchers to tackle the difficult inscriptions in particular rather than cast them to the wind to be taken up by ‘the fringe practitioners’?¹⁶

1.10 Delimitation of material

The material included in the investigation and the corpus is delimited by several parameters: form, function, dating and language. It can be noted that I do not employ any geographic delimitation. The runic plates under investigation thus derive from the Scandinavian countries (no Viking-Age runic inscriptions are currently known from Norway or Iceland, see however fn. 17) as well as from other areas with a strong Scandinavian presence during the Viking Age. The delimitation to the Viking Age is based on the difference in physical form and content of the mediaeval plates, which are usually made of lead and often rolled or folded. The inscriptions are often in Latin, and frequently of a type unlike those on the Viking-Age plates, consisting of Latin prayers (*Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*) and magic words deriving from Antiquity or the Orient (the *sator* and *agla* formulas etc.). Their inclusion would inevitably have demanded the creation of two diverse corpora requiring different methods of investigation.

As regards the delimitation in time, I include all the runic plates which for diverse reasons (archaeological, linguistic or runographic) can be dated to the period c. 700–1150, i.e. to the Viking Age, the final phase of the Iron Age. If a runic plate is dated to 1100–1200, it is included only if it shows no (typological or linguistic) mediaeval features: its runes are thus of Viking-Age type and the language is one of the early Scandinavian languages (not Latin). If the runic plate is undated, or its dating is problematic, I include it only if nothing in the inscription or the form of the object indicates a mediaeval origin.

Copper plates with inscriptions in Latin (the Spånga plate [U ATA322-1668-2011] and Vassunda plates 1 and 2 [U DLM 70 and U AST1;179]) are excluded from the investigation on the basis of their language. Two problem-

¹⁶ “Den stora frågan jag nu vill ställa är: När skall vi ge tapp? Är det inte vår plikt som språkforskare att gå i närkamp med just de svåra inskrifterna och inte släppa dem vind för våg för att tas omhand av ‘the fringe practitioners’?”

atic copper plates are nonetheless included, Sigtuna plate 2 and Vassunda plate 3, since it is unclear whether their inscriptions are composed in Latin or runic Swedish. This is a question which I attempt to resolve.

A runic plate from Vä, Scania (DR ATA5000/45), dated in DK to the Viking Age (DK no Sk 16), is excluded as the plate is probably mediaeval (Källström 2015a). A runic plate from Källa Old Church, Öland (Agåker 2010:57 f.; no signature in SRD; kept in SHM under inventory number 31153:321), dated by Fanny Agåker (2010:98 f.) to the late Viking or early Middle Ages, is typologically close to other mediaeval plates: it appears to be made of lead (or possibly tin), is folded, and contains runes and Latin or Cyrillic letters. This plate was therefore excluded subsequent to its investigation (18 November 2015).

I further exclude all the objects which do not correspond to the definition of runic plate provided above. If the object has three or more carving surfaces it is therefore rejected. This applies, for example, to the Hjortholm bronze amulet (DR DKSj24), the Söllested Church bronze amulet (DR DKSyd15) and the Hviding amulet (DR DKSJy76). The same applies if the object contains no runes or rune-like signs but only unidentifiable lines (e.g. the Sønderhøj Nord plate [DR DKBh66]). Objects which are most likely to have had a profane function are also excluded. This is in order to create as homogenous a group of portable objects as possible. For this reason I exclude a silver plate from Birka (U ANF1937;163) which is part of a jewellery pendant (possibly a scent container), a plate from Skänninge (Ög ATA5591/61) which apparently functioned as a mount, as well as an Arabic coin from Bornholm (DR 410).

I include both runic plates which have been given interpretations in one of the early Scandinavian languages as well as those lacking interpretation. If the plate in question contains only one or two words which have been reliably read and interpreted (as for example the Roskilde plate), it is considered with the interpreted plates.

1.11 Presentation of the material

The runic plates are presented below according to different parameters, which in only one case (Table 5) concern the content of the inscriptions. I shall primarily consider aspects of content after the execution of the strictly runological analyses (see Table 27 – Table 28 in Chap. 8). The presentation begins, however, somewhat anticipating my analysis, with a comprehensive table (Table 1) of the distribution of the runic plates in content and time.

Table 1. Summary of the material.

RUNIC PLATES		Type				Content		Find context			Country				Time (700–1150)				Total
		A	B	C	fragm.	interpreted	uninterpreted	grave	residential	unknown	Denmark	Russia	Sweden	Brit. Isles	eV	mV	IV	V	
Material	copper	12	7	1	1	9	12	5	12	4	1	1	18	1	4	3	6	8	21
	bronze	8	3	4	4	7	12	8	9	2	5	2	12	0	8	3	6	2	19
	silver	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	alloy	1	0	0	4	2	3	0	5	0	1	0	4	0	0	1	3	1	5
Time	eV	9	1	2	0	5	7	6	6	0	0	3	9	0					12
	mV	2	3	1	1	3	4	3	4	0	4	0	3	0					7
	IV	6	3	2	5	10	6	3	11	2	4	0	11	1					16
	V	5	3	0	3	1	10	1	7	3	0	0	11	0					11
Country	Denmark	3	2	0	3	4	4	1	5	2									8
	Russia	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0									3
	Sweden	15	8	5	6	12	22	12	18	4									34
	Brit. Isles	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0									1
Content	interpreted	9	5	1	4														19
	uninterpreted	13	5	4	5														27
Context	grave	4	5	4	0	5	8												13
	residential	15	4	1	7	11	16												27
	unknown	3	1	0	2	3	3												6
Runes	conv.	9	5	3	6	11	12	11	10	2	5	0	18	0	7	4	10	2	23
	unconv.	3	0	0	2	2	3	0	4	1	0	2	3	0	2	0	0	3	5
	conv. & unconv.	8	5	2	1	6	10	2	11	3	3	1	11	1	3	3	6	4	16
	runl. lines	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total		22	10	5	9	19	27	13	27	6	8	3	34	1	12	7	16	11	46

1.11.1 Runic plates: Country and Chronology

The 46 Viking-Age runic plates which according to my definition are known today have been found in Denmark (8), Russia (3), Sweden (34) and the British Isles (1).¹⁷ These are further divided in Table 2 into: early Viking-Age (eV: 750–950), mid Viking-Age (mV: 950–1050) and late Viking-Age (IV: 1050–1150). The designation V is used for those cases which can be dated no more precisely than the Viking Age. The datings provided here are taken from the reference literature (provided in Appendix 1) and will be amended in the main text in a small number of cases.

One immediately observes that the majority of the plates come from Swedish territory, and that most of the earliest runic plates were found in

¹⁷ The plate from the British Isles is from Orkney, which was under Norwegian rule at the time. The nationality of the plate is thus presumably Norwegian, although I choose to retain its geographic affinity for the sake of simplicity.

Table 2. Chronological distribution of the runic plates by country.

	eV	mV	IV	V	Total
Denmark		4	4		8
Russia	3				3
Sweden	9	3	11	11	34
British Isles			1		1
Total	12	7	16	11	46

Sweden. These include the Hallbjäns plate, the Gällungs plates and the Klinta plates from Gotland, the plates from Ulvsunda and Järfälla from the Stockholm area as well as the Hovgård plate and the Björkö plates from the Birka area.

The find contexts of the runic plates can be loosely divided into two types: burial contexts and residential contexts (Table 3). Broadly speaking, residential contexts can be further divided into urban areas and other areas. I pay particular attention to the fortified settlements (designated as fort. in the tables) in the residential contexts. These include *borgar*, *gorodišča*, *broughs* and so on. I also specify artisan contexts (workshops).

We observe that 13 runic plates were found in burial contexts and 27 in residential contexts, which contradicts the general assumption that Viking-Age runic plates are usually found in graves. This assumption, based on Arthur Nordén's (1943:186 f.) conviction that runic plates were primarily amulets against revenants, has been embraced by many other scholars. It is thus not rare to encounter unverified pronouncements to the effect that "Those runic plates whose provenance can be confirmed were mostly found in graves" (Karlenby 1985:50).¹⁸

Of these thirteen grave plates, only one comes from Denmark (Lund plate 2) while twelve are from Sweden. Two of these, the Järfälla plate and the Hässelby plate, are from stone settings devoid of skeletal remains (these may be symbolic graves or cenotaphs). In three cases we have precise information on the location of the plate on the body: the Leksand plate was on the skeleton's forehead, Lund plate 2 on its left shoulder and Vassunda plate 3 on its right side or left hip (there is some uncertainty). All three cases are probably Christian graves. At least three (but possibly four) of the twelve Swedish grave plates derive from graves which have been assessed as belonging to women and which are probably all pre-Christian: these are Klinta plates 1 and 2, the Hallbjäns plate and possibly the Ulvsunda plate.¹⁹ It is also interesting to observe that all the runic plates of type C (folded plates), with the exception of

¹⁸ "De runbleck där proveniensens kunnat styrkas har till största delen hittats i gravar". It should be observed that Karlenby was not completely wrong, as in 1985 only 13 runic plates from graves were known, in addition to 12 from residential areas and three of unknown provenance. It is nevertheless an exaggeration to maintain that most of them were found in graves.

¹⁹ Despite the great number of pearls, it is unclear whether this was the grave of a female or male.

Table 3. Find contexts of the runic plates.

Runic plates	Burial context	Residential contexts						Un-known	Total
		Urban contexts			Other contexts				
		city	work shop	fort.	rural	fort.	un-known		
Sweden	12	9	2	3			4	4	34
Denmark	1	2			2		1	2	8
British Isles and Russia		1		2		1			4
Total	13	19			8			6	46

Sigtuna plate 2 (whose folding was probably not deliberate), derive from burial contexts.

Information on the specific findplace of six plates is either unreliable or entirely lacking. The 27 runic plates from residential areas are often metal detector finds uncovered during archaeological excavations of Viking-Age and early mediaeval settlement areas. Sometimes further information is available, however. One runic plate was found in the ruins of a building which probably had a cultic or mercantile function (the Ladoga plate), two plates are from an artisanal context (Solberga plates 1 and 2) and two plates were uncovered in a military context in a building which belonged to the Birka garrison. It is often difficult, however, to establish the function of the archaeological features with any measure of certainty, and a great number of plates have been found in the disturbed cultural layers of Viking-Age and early mediaeval residential areas. In the division between urban and other environments, the former clearly dominate, which is hardly surprising. The concentration of both people experienced in carving runes and those in need of rune-magical help must have been greater in cities than in rural areas. One should nonetheless observe that the circumstances for preservation and methods of investigation may have also contributed to the figures.

1.11.2 Typological distribution by time and place

Runic plates are quadrilateral plaques which are usually rectangular, square or trapezoid in shape (i.e. one end is narrowed). They can be divided into type A (pendants), type B (discs without suspension holes or eyes), type C (rolled or folded plates) and fragments.

From Table 4 we can see that 22 plates are of A-type and 10 of B. Three of the 22 pendants are from Denmark, three from Russia, fifteen from Sweden and one from the British Isles. Two of the ten type-B pendants are from Denmark and the rest from Sweden. Four of the C-type plates are definitely from Sweden and one more (Sigtuna plate 2, here with a question mark) may be.

Table 4. Typological distribution of the runic plates by place.

	Sweden	Denmark	Non-Scandinavian	Total
A	15	3	4	22
B	8	2		10
C	4+1(?)			5
Fragm.	6	3		9
Total	34	8	4	46

The rest of the plates have broken ends or are fragmentary and cannot therefore be typologically classified.

Most of the plates are made of bronze or copper, although it should be observed that the delimitation between the two is arbitrary. No chemical analyses have been made of the runic plates, as far as I am aware, and the conclusions as to type of material are subjectively based on appearance. I nonetheless maintain this more or less subjective demarcation to see whether it provides any interesting results. The following figures must consequently be treated with caution.

Five of the Danish plates are made of bronze, one of copper and one of silver. Two Russian plates are bronze while a third is copper. Twelve of the Swedish plates are bronze, eighteen copper. The plate from the British Isles is also copper.

As regards the typological distribution in time (Table 1), it may be noted that both copper and bronze seem to have been used to approximately the same extent during all of the Viking Age. One may nevertheless observe that copper was used to a somewhat lesser degree during the early Viking Age (and presumably more during the late Viking Age, since most of the runic plates which cannot be closely dated probably belong to the middle or late Viking Age).

As regards the distribution in shape (Table 1) in relation to material, it may be observed that pendants of bronze (8 in number) dominate over bronze 'non-pendants' (3). The same distribution applies to copper plates (12 to 7). This is thus a result of the fact that we have twice as many pendants as non-pendants.

1.11.3 Chronological distribution according to content

Content here refers to the runes and runic inscriptions. Today we know of 19 runic plates judged by one or more scholars to have inscriptions in runic Scandinavian. The remaining material (27 items) consists of uninterpreted plates. This does not mean, however, that most of the Viking-Age runic plates are non-lexical. The fact that the plates have not been interpreted may depend on many factors. Some of the 27 uninterpreted plates are too damaged or fragmentary to allow interpretation, while others may be encrypted in a way that still eludes us. Some plates were found only recently and may be interpreted in

the near future. I would judge that the number of lexical runic plates is approximately as great as the number of non-lexical ones, if not greater. It is nonetheless possible that some of the interpreted plates are in fact non-linguistic. I take no position on these problems in this dissertation but base my work entirely on the existing interpretations. If an interpretation has been suggested, I include the plate in question among the interpreted plates, even if only one word has been interpreted or a method of encryption which I find difficult to accept is involved.

Four of the interpreted plates are from Denmark, three from Russia and the remaining twelve from Sweden. The interpreted and uninterpreted runic plates are chronologically distributed as follows:

Table 5. Chronological distribution of the runic plates by content.

	eV	mV	IV	V	Total
Interpreted	5	3	10	1	19
Uninterpreted	7	4	6	10	27
Total	12	7	16	11	46

Interpreted runic plates are predominant during the late Viking Age. There are on the other hand ten uninterpreted runic plates which have only been loosely dated to the Viking Age, and the majority of these may date from the middle or end of the Viking Age. The relationship between interpreted and uninterpreted plates may therefore be considered to be fairly even.

1.12 Conclusions

If the runic plates known today are representative, the presentation of the material shows that plates of type A (pendants) were more popular during the Viking Age than type B (non-pendants). It is moreover among the pendants that we find examples of plates that have been repaired (the Ladoga plate and possibly Lund plate 1) as well as plates that may have been recycled (Solberga plate 3).

The chronological distribution of the Viking-Age runic plates is particularly interesting in revealing that the earliest runic plates come from Swedish territory, from Gotland and the Mälaren Valley. This suggests that the early Russian plates from Staraja Ladoga and Rjurikovo Gorodišče, which have been dated to the tenth century (and which may even be older), were also products of East Scandinavia, taken by the Vikings to Rus'. To compare with the early Swedish plates we must first investigate the inscriptions on the Russian plates, but at an early stage we note that the Russian plates most resemble in shape the plates from the Birka–Alsnö Castle-complex and Öland. Hedenstierna-Jonson (2006:75) notes similarities in the material culture of

Birka on one hand and Staraja Ladoga and Rjurikovo Gorodišče on the other. She further observes (2009:161) the dominant presence of Scandinavians of Swedish origin in Rus':

The Scandinavian finds in ancient Russia mainly originate from central Sweden. The distribution of finds and runic inscriptions shows that people from all parts of Eastern Sweden participated in the easterly journeys, but the closest ties were with the Lake Mälaren region and the Åland islands, and to a lesser extent with Östergötland and Öland [...]. The only direct central Swedish parallel to the Russian towns was the proto-town of *Birka*, founded, like Staraja Ladoga, c. 750.

It appears that bronze and copper were used to almost the same extent in the production of plates. Bronze was however used more often during the early Viking Age, while the number of copper plates seems to increase towards the end of the period. It appears that lead was for some reason not regarded as suitable for the production of runic plates during the Viking Age. (A search for *bly* 'lead' and *vikingatid* 'Viking Age' in the collections of SHM shows that it was a familiar material and could be used in the production of different objects, primarily weights.) Runic plates of lead become popular during the Middle Ages however, presumably due to continental influence. It appears that silver was considered similarly unsuitable for the purpose of making plates (unless silver plates were recast due to the value of the material). We know of only one silver plate (the Østermarie plate) in any case. While it is difficult to be sure why copper and bronze were considered suitable, there are undeniably several factors in the materials' favour. Objects made of copper alloys are fairly resilient (it is more durable than lead) while not as expensive as those made from precious metals. They are, furthermore, reddish-yellow and shiny when new, which is not only beautiful but may have had symbolic value. The fact that plates of copper, or of copper alloys such as bronze, were regarded as having healing properties is also a possible factor in the choice of these metals (Seligmann 1927: 160, 169–170).

Thirteen of the Viking-Age runic plates with a known find context come from graves and 27 from residential environments. This signifies that the Viking-Age runic plates are not as unequivocally linked to graves as has previously been thought, although a large number of Viking-Age plates do derive from graves. Mediaeval plates are, conversely, seldom found in graves. Stoklund (1987:198) and Steenholt Olesen (2010:167) note that mediaeval runic amulets are only exceptionally found in burial contexts, and Agåker's catalogue (2010:109–138) of runic plates from the Viking and Middle Ages (both Scandinavian and non-Scandinavian) contains only seven mediaeval plates found in burial contexts.

Four of the 13 plates are type A and five are type B. One cannot thus maintain that either type A or B has any particular connection with graves. It is remarkable, then, that all four of the runic plates of incontrovertible C-type come from graves. (The only exception is Sigtuna plate 2, which was probably not deliberately folded.) It has sometimes been assumed that the folding of

runic plates was linked to ritual magic acts performed in connection with the burial (Nordén 1943:188; Svärdström 1969a:36), and this assumption is supported to some extent in my material. The folding or rolling of plates was typical during the Middle Ages of the lead plates with Latin inscriptions. Two of the Viking-Age grave plates of type C come from burial contexts which are presumably Christian (the plates from Hässelby and Östra Aros), while the other two cases are uncertain: Gällungs plates 1 och 2 derive from the north-western section of the burial ground in Gällungs, where twenty graves were investigated in 1973. Twelve were inhumation graves (one of these a horse-man's grave), while four were indisputably cremation graves. All of the graves were from the Viking Age, but it is unknown exactly which grave yielded the Gällungs plates. One may consider in this light the possibility of two independent traditions, one indigenous (where runic plates were folded or rolled and placed in graves) and one continental, arriving with the mediaeval lead plates (i.e. folded plates which are not found in graves). We have three cases from inhumation graves where the plates were placed on the body of the deceased, and in two further cases we find a peculiar kind of grave without skeletal remains: it is tempting in both latter cases to consider whether these may be symbolic burials of some kind. With these results I wish to conclude the presentation and proceed to the detailed investigation of the inscriptions on the Viking-Age runic plates.

2 Comparative material

æiki er : sliht sem munir
eigi er slikt sem munir(?)

‘Nothing is comparable to desire/interest(?)’

N 122

In the introduction I divide the runes of the runic plates into two types: conventional and unconventional. The Viking-Age short-twig and long-branch runes are designated as conventional. The corpus nevertheless contains a large number of plates whose inscriptions show or are thought to show writing signs additional to those just mentioned, such as staveless runes, older runes, coordinate runes, mirror runes (which I call balanced runes), runes with non-graphematic branches etc. These runes are designated as unconventional in this work. An introductory discussion of Viking-Age runic inscriptions with similar signs is required in order to provide more secure readings of the runic plates containing such runes. It can be confirmed that some runic plates are encrypted, and the unconventional runes on for example the Ladoga plate can justly be called cryptic runes. Additional inscriptions on plates may contain encrypted sections, as is the case with the beginning of the Kvinneby plate, for example, or the obverse of Solberga plate 1. Other runic plates may show allographic variation in the set of graphemes; this may account for the staveless runes featured on Sigtuna plates 1 och 2.

In the following, I intend to focus on the securely read and interpreted inscriptions which contain divergent signs resembling those on the runic plates, although I will not discuss different systems of encryption. I would like to note that the divergent signs should not all be regarded as representations of divergent writing systems; rather, one should consider each runic plate as exemplifying the set of graphemes at the disposal of the carver. Just as the approach of Modern Philology allows each written text to be considered as its own universe, each runic plate can also be regarded as its own little world with its individual graphemic set. As far as is possible, I intend to try to use the internal context in my readings, although I will not completely limit myself to this but will also seek parallels in other runic inscriptions with divergent writing characters. In order to do this in a controlled way, I wish first to present these runic inscriptions and the writing signs found therein as well as to analyse the reliability of the suggested readings.

My comparative material consists primarily of Viking-Age runic inscriptions with deviant writing signs or writing systems which are reminiscent of the unconventional sets of signs on the runic plates, but which unlike the plates

have secure readings and interpretations. I do not intend to provide a comprehensive overview of all of this material, as this would lead me beyond the scope of the dissertation, but aim instead to distinguish between what can and cannot be substantiated.

2.1 Older runes in younger runic inscriptions

Four Viking-Age runic plates have traditionally been read as containing one or several older runes. Thus the Hallbjäns plate has an older **A**-rune in one of the alternative readings presented by Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:187 f.). The Villberga plate also has an **A**-rune in one of Nordén's reading alternatives (1943:174). The inscription on the Ladoga plate has several older runes according to the readings of Kuz'menko and Mel'nikova (Kuz'menko 1997b:197 and Mel'nikova 2001:196 respectively). There is however no consensus on which runes are involved: Kuz'menko identifies **A**, **W**, **M** and **D**, while Mel'nikova identifies **M** and **H**. Gorodišče 1, according to Mel'nikova (2001:182), also contains the older runes **W**, **G** and **D**. Additional younger inscriptions with older runes are often cited as parallels to these runic plates and it is therefore important to investigate which older runes can in fact be confirmed in younger runic inscriptions.

Older runes are considered to occur in runic inscriptions with younger runes in three cases:

1) They may be encountered in transitional inscriptions (650–800s), which are characterised by the graphematic transition from a rune-row containing 24 runes to one containing 16. According to the model of classification proposed by Marie Stoklund (1996:200), however, the graphematic system of the younger futhark comprises older runes, meaning that they are used as allographs of certain graphemes found in the 16-type rune-row; they do not however constitute independent graphemes. It is of course also possible that they occur outside of the younger rune-row, as is the case with the generally accepted **w**-rune on the Sölvesborg stone (DR 356). I will investigate below whether this latter possibility is consistent with what is actually attested in the material.

2) Older runes may also be encountered in younger inscriptions as a separate graphematic system based on the 16-type rune-row. The older runes of the Rök stone (Ög 136) constitute the sole example, and it is worth pointing out the difference between this and the previous type of use. The older runes of the Rök stone are used as a system of code and are not mixed with the graphemic set of younger runes, despite being based on this set and occupying places in the system it dictates. The difference is thus functional.

3) The third possibility is that older runes can be used as runic ideographs.

An examination of case 1, the transitional inscriptions, shows several indisputable attestations of the older runes **h**, **a** and **m** (**H**, **f** and **M**).²⁰ Incidences have been proposed of another four older runes, **w**, **g**, **d** and **o**, but, as discussed below, these are for various reasons uncertain. (I omit, however, the **o**-rune on the runestone from Vatn, N KJ68, since no older **o**-runes have been identified on runic plates.) My scepticism towards attestations of older runes in transitional inscriptions was initiated by a discussion with Magnus Källström in 2008 (I was at that time a student of his in runology at Stockholm University). Since then we have often independently studied the same runic inscription and frequently made similar assessments on this point (cf. e.g. Källström 2013a:102–105).

Several scholars have identified an attestation of a **w**-rune on the Sölvesborg stone (DR 356). This is in my opinion highly uncertain since the right edge of the stone containing the putative attestation is heavily damaged, and only the upper half of the rune is visible (Figure 2). It is thus impossible to discount the possibility that a further bow may have featured on the lower part of the mainstave: thus the rune may have been **b**. The putative **w**-rune on the Sölvesborg stone occurs in a runic sequence which has been read as **urti wapi**. Only the upper parts of the mainstaves can be discerned, however, and the final two runes, **pi**, in the assumed name *Waði* are barely visible. Worsaae's sketch (1846, plate XIII, see figure 2) shows the right edge of the stone as defective, and the runes in the right row (apart from the final three or four, which are missing entirely) are damaged, with only their upper sections visible. *DRI* 1 (1942:399) does state that "the space does not permit"²¹ a reading of **b** there, which presumably means that the distance from the rune's upper section to the edge of the stone is too small to allow the rune a further bow on the lower component of the mainstave. This may nonetheless be questioned: the right edge of the stone is so damaged that the area may well have been much larger than it is now, in which case these two rows would have corresponded better to each other in size (in its present condition the runes of the left row are somewhat larger than those of the right). Otto von Friesen (1916:55), who examined the stone twice, in 1913 and 1914, observes that this rune "may be read as **w** or **b**: most likely perhaps **b**, due to there being an even, light, narrow stroke in the flaking in the edge of the stone which appears to be the bottom [of the carving furrow] of a lower **b**-branch."²² (See von Friesen's photograph [1916, fig. 14] reproduced in figure

²⁰ The runes **h**, **a** and **m** collectively occur on the Ribe skull from Northern Jutland which is dated to the beginning of the eighth century, more specifically to 725–750 (DR EM85:151B, Søvsø 2013:173–176). **h** and **m** both occur on the Helnæs stone from Funen (DR 190), **m** and **a** on the Sparlösa stone (Vg 119), **m** on the Sölvesborg stone from Blekinge (DR 356) and **h** on the Høje Tåstrup stone from Zealand (DR 250), on the Snoldelev stone, Zealand (DR 248), on the Rävsnal stone, Bohuslän (Bo KJ80), and possibly on a fragment of a runestone from Finsta, Skederid (U ATA39/47, Källström 2007b:50–55).

²¹ "pladsen tillader ikke"

²² "kan läsas som **w** eller **b**: kanske snarast **b**, därför att i kantflagringen af stenen finns en jämn, ljus, smal streck [*sic!*] som ser ut att vara botten [av ristningsspåret] till en nedre **b**-bistaf"

2, where he marks this stroke.) My conclusion as to the uncertain character of the **w**-runes on the Sölvesborg stone is based on photographs and reading reports, but has been confirmed by the field investigation of Magnus Källström (in his lecture ‘På jakt efter vikingatidens skrifttraditioner’ [‘Hunting for the writing traditions of the Viking Age’], Higher seminar, Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism, Stockholm University, on the 30th November 2012, see also Källström 2013a:105).

A further **w**-runes occurs, according to Ivar Lindquist (1920), on the Hoga stone in Orust (Bo Peterson 1992), but this attestation is similarly uncertain: the presumed **w**-runes may also be read as **p**, and according to Magnus Källström (2007a:416) it is “to judge by the shape most likely **p**”.²³ Lena Peterson who, like Lindquist, chooses to read **w** on the Hoga stone, seeks support for her reading in the Sölvesborg inscription discussed above (1992:104) as well as in the inscription from Rävsaal (p. 95), where the **w/p**-runes in the name **hariwulfs/haripulfs** is nonetheless also suspect (see below). The supposed **w**-runes on the Hoga stone purportedly occurs in the runic sequence **tainwaniaromulā**, which Peterson (p. 100) interprets as *stein vann hēr ā mūla* ‘executed the stone here on the muzzle’.²⁴ One can nonetheless, like Källström, read the inscription as **tainponiarbmuln** and interpret the construction **tainpon** as *stein þann* (‘this stone’, which Peterson 1992:94 also suggests as a variant). Källström (2007a: 416) further observes that this construction would correspond to the Norwegian Tu stone’s (N 228) **stain þon**.

The Rävsaal inscription from Bohuslän (Bo KJ80) has an uncertain **w**-runes in the name **hariwulfs/haripulfs**. Photographs show that the bow of the runes does not begin quite at the top of the mainstave but somewhat lower, and thus the runes are indistinguishable from a **p**-runes. While the latter is not attested in this inscription, it must have been in the carver’s repertoire. Sture Allén (2007:17) identifies **p**, arguing for this reading as follows: “With its long, softly rounded and symmetrically placed branch it has the same character as corresponding runes on the Rök stone and the Sparlösa stone.”²⁵

Allén (p. 17) also refers to Bengt Odenstedt, Bengt Loman and Harry Andersen, who similarly consider the fifth runes on the Rävsaal stone to be **p**. Gustavson (1996) has also examined the stone and concluded that the runes should be read as **p**. Källström (2013a:105, n. 3) agrees, and Michael P. Barnes (1998: 452) is also highly suspicious of the suggested **w**-runes on the stone. He nonetheless believes (1998:452) that the Sölvesborg stone (DR 356), which is discussed above, “almost certainly does contain **w**”, although, as I have shown, this cannot be regarded as certain either. It can thus be confirmed that there are no indisputable attestations of the **w**-runes in transitional inscriptions, and that it perhaps does not occur at all.

²³ “av formen att döma snarast **p**”

²⁴ “utförde stenen här på mulen”

²⁵ “Med sin långa, mjukt rundade och symmetriskt placerade bistav har den samma karaktär som motsvarigheterna på Rökstenen och Sparlösa-stenen.”

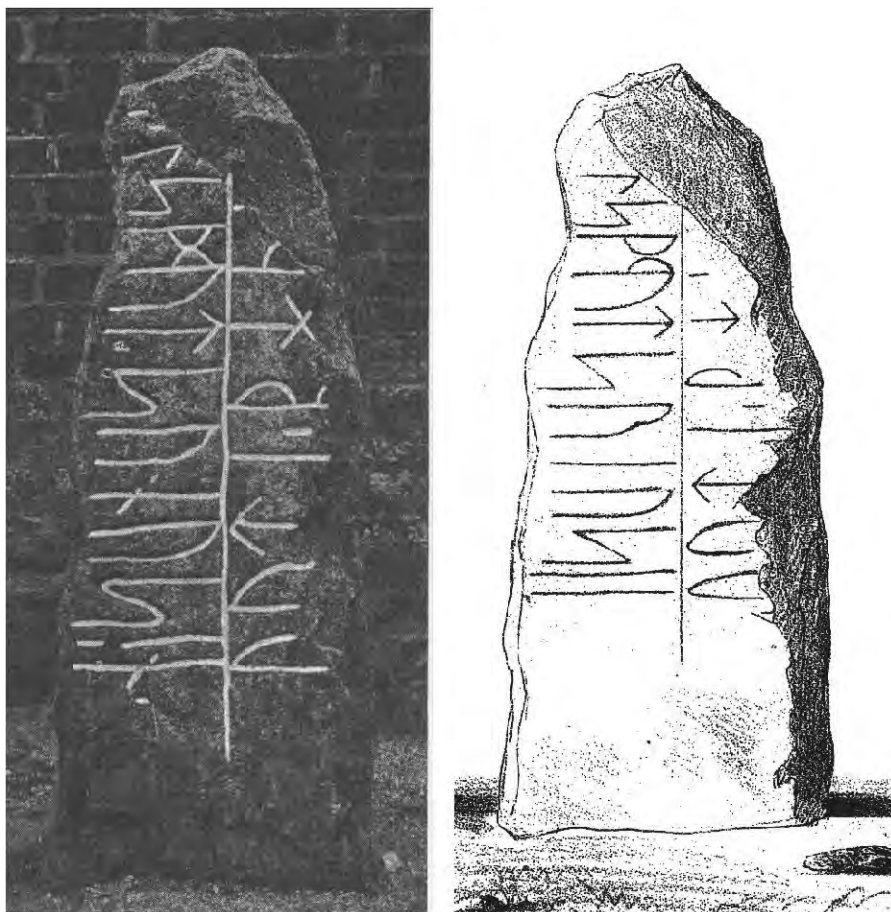


Figure 2. The Sölvesborg stone DR 356: O. von Friesen's photograph (1916, fig. 14) and J. J. A. Worsaae's sketch (1846, plate XIII).

The three attestations of **D**-runes in younger inscriptions are similarly uncertain. Two presumed **D**-runes occur on a picture stone from Lillbjärs, Stenkyrka parish (G 268). I cannot agree with the assessment in *GR* 3 (G 268, p. 15): "The runes may be characterised as a mixture of Proto-Scandinavian and short-twig runes."²⁶ The reading of the inscription, and in particular of the presumed short-twig runes, is far too uncertain. I examined the inscription (together with Magnus Källström on February 20th, 2012) and regard it as highly doubtful that short-twig runes occur in the inscription at all. It is possible that it contains **D**-runes, but they do not in that case occur in conjunction with more securely attested younger runes. I also observed that some of the lines of the inscription may constitute the continuation of the picture found just below (see Figure 3, black arrows), i.e. the mast of a ship with a sail. Källström (2012b:125) con-

²⁶ "Runorna kan karakteriseras som en blandning av urnordiska och kortkvistrunor."



Figure 3. The Lillbjärs stone G 268.

firms the same: “In this case some of the short-twig forms are eliminated and it is quite possible that this is an inscription comprising only older runes²⁷.”

On the Roes stone (G 40), the rune **D** forms part of an unusual bind-rune **UDR**, which is usually understood as the personal name *Uddr*. The inscription, and this bind-rune in particular, has nonetheless attracted several readings and interpretations (see e.g. Lundberg 1949 and MacLeod 2002:98–101). Lundberg suggests reading the inscription as **iupin:UDRRak:** and interpreting it as ‘Udd carved this horse’.²⁸ Apart from the problematic bind-rune, there is great disagreement over the identification of the final rune. If read as **k**, the inscription can be regarded as belonging to the younger rune-row, but if not, it is problematic to consider G 40 among the younger inscriptions. Bugge (1900) and Löffler (1901) read this rune and the preceding one jointly as **D**. Olsen (1919) and

²⁷ “I så fall försvinner några av de antagna kortkvistformerna och det är fullt möjligt att det i stället rör sig om en inskrift med enbart äldre runor.”

²⁸ ‘denna häst ristade Udd’



Figure 4. The Roes stone G 40.

Lundberg (1949) regard it as **k**, while Marstrander (1952:173 f.) identifies **f** at the end of the inscription. None of these readings is particularly probable, although the most widely accepted is **k**. I investigated the inscription in November of 2011 and can confirm that the branch of the rune in question is overly short in comparison with the other branches (see Figure 4). It appears as a small stroke and is placed far too high on the mainstave, which it does not quite touch.

The further fact that the bind-rune **h̅** features the **u**-branch on its right mainstave rather than its left suggests that the **u** in the reading order indicated should be read after the presumed **d**-rune. I can only confirm that while the shape of this rune is clear, its sound value is not. Magnus Källström (at the Third Full-Day Rune Rede, Copenhagen, 26th November, 2010) suggested considering the rune as a variant of an older **h**-rune, offering as a parallel an example on a fragment of a runestone from Finsta, Skederid (U ATA3916/47). I agree with Källström that such a variant may have existed, as I discuss in the catalogue (see Appendix 1, the multiphonographeme <h>). This attestation cannot be considered definite due to the highly controversial reading of the bind-rune and the fact that the inscription may not contain any younger runes: as we have observed, the occurrence of the **k**-rune in the inscription is not assured either.

There are some further uncertain attestations of the use of the **a**-rune in younger runic inscriptions. A **a**-rune occurs on the Ribe skull (DR EM85;151B) in the interpretation proposed by Moltke (1985:151 f.), but more recent investigations prefer to regard the rune as **n** with an overlong branch (in Stoklund & al. 2004a). A sign resembling an older runic **a** occurs on the picture

stone from Gothem Church, Gotland (G 157). I nonetheless agree with the assessment of Källström (2012b:123): “Much more plausible is however that this is a delimitation mark. The runes to the right of this sign are in fact mirrored and should be read from right to left, while those to the left of the same sign face the right way and presumably run from left to right.”²⁹

We can thus confirm that indisputable attestations of older runes in younger inscriptions are lacking, apart from **h**, **m** and **a** (**ᚱ**, **ᚱ** and **ᚦ**), all three of which may comprise allographs of the younger **h**, **m** and **a**-runes (cf. also Källström 2013a:105). This reduces the probability of finding older **w**, **g** or **d**-runes on Viking-Age runic plates, unless these comprise a system of encryption such as occurs with the older runes on the Rök stone.

The sole exemplification of case 2 is with the older runes of the Rök stone. These are not transitional runes which continued in use after the transition from the 24-type rune-row to the 16-type. Instead they constitute a system of encryption based on the 16-type rune-row, where every younger rune is replaced by a different older rune (Figure 5). The rune **d**, for example, can thus designate both phonemes /t/ and /d/, while the rune **w** can represent /u/. The runes in the two encrypted rows on the reverse of the Rök stone can justifiably be designated as unconventional, since they represent the phonemes usually designated by younger runes.



Figure 5. The unconventional runes of the Rök stone (Ög 136).

There is one reliable attestation of the use of older runes as runic ideographs in younger runic inscriptions (case 3). An inscription consisting of two rows of runes occurs on the face of a cliff in Ingelstad (Ög 43). The first row is uncontroversially read as **salsikarpisul** *Salsi gærði söl*, ‘Salsi made the sun’. The next row begins with a **d**-rune framed by two punctuation marks (:ᚱ:); this is followed by a sequence which has received various interpretations. Some runes in the second row are damaged and therefore permit different readings. Nordén (1937:155) reads :ᚱ: **skutli pīna hīu** *Dagr skutil penna hiō* ‘Dag cut this shooting weapon’ (*skutill* ‘weapon for shooting, esp. harpoon’ [Fritzner];³⁰ the normalisation and translation are my own). Brate (in *SRI* 2, p. 43 f.) reads :ᚱ: **skut-- p--a hīu** *Dagr skuta ī þætta hiō* ‘Dag cut this on the cliff’.³¹ The inscription is thus regarded as having two carvers, Salsi and Dag. The first row may

²⁹ “Betydligt troligare är dock att det rör sig om ett avgränsningstecken. Runorna till höger om detta tecken är nämligen spegelvända och skall läsas från höger till vänster, medan de till vänster om samma tecken är rättvända och sannolikt löper från vänster till höger.”

³⁰ ‘skudvaaben, især harpun’

³¹ “Dag högg detta på bergknallen.”

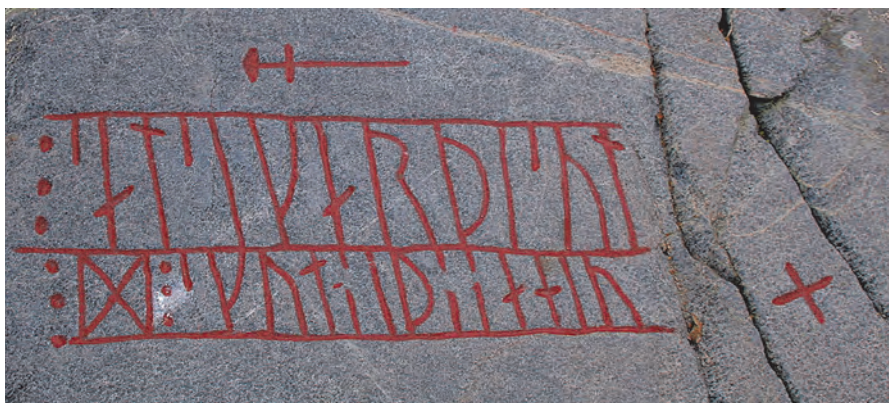


Figure 6. The Ingelstad stone Ög 43.

be connected with a deep cup mark surrounded by nine strokes which occurs on the surface of the stone and presumably represents the sun made by *Salsi*. The second row, in Nordén's interpretation, refers to a different carving above the inscription (a sword or spear; see Figure 6).

Common to the interpretations is their identification of the **D**-rune as an ideograph for the name *Dagr*. The **D**-rune is isolated from the inscription by two marks of punctuation and its attestation may be considered certain.

The result of my investigation is that the older runes **H**, **A** and **M** remain in younger transitional inscriptions, but that undeniable attestations of **g**, **D** and **w** are lacking for the transitional period. Older runes could also be used in younger inscriptions either as a form of code or as ideographs.

2.2 Staveless runes

It has been suggested that the inscriptions on two runic plates, namely Sigtuna plates 1 and 2, contain staveless runes. With the inclusion of these plates, a total of 20 inscriptions with staveless runes is known (see the overview in Peterson 1994:223 and Fridell 2000:85). The term *staveless runes* is, as observed by Fridell (2000:98; 2011:81), misleading, since fewer than half of these runes are formed by the omission of the stave. The rest are instead created by other simplifications, which in nine cases derive from the stave itself. Nor is the term *hålsinge runes* satisfactory since these types of runes are found not only in Hälsingland, but also in Södermanland, Medelpad and Sigtuna in Uppland as well as Bergen in Norway. The term *simplified runes* would probably be a better description, but I do not regard this as reason enough to change the established designation in this work.

It is adequate for my purposes to confirm that staveless runes are safely attested in Viking-Age runic inscriptions and may occur both in parallel with the standard set of graphemes (on Sö 137, Sö 148, Sö 154, Sö 159 and Sö 164) and as allographs of some runes in the standard set of graphemes (Sö 106 as well as seven inscriptions from Medelpad, see Bianchi 2010:150, fn. 29); they may also constitute their own set of graphemes (on Hs 8 †, Hs 10, Hs 12, Hs 14 and Hs 15).

Several uncertainties nevertheless pertain to staveless runes. There was no clarity over the appearance of the **f**-rune until 1990, when Lena Peterson was able to provide a solution to this problem (see Peterson 1994), and we are not sure what the óss-rune in a staveless rune-row would look like, if we disregard two dubious attestations: on Hs 10 and on a runic stick with the staveless futhark from Bergen (N B41, see Fridell 2000:89 f.; 2011:80, 82). Marco Bianchi provides some examples of deviant staveless runes from Södermanland (2010:147) which show that the principles of simplification could be understood in various ways in different writing environments and that staveless runes which differ from the expected ones may therefore be encountered.

2.3 Bind-runes

On runic plates, bind-runes may occur either as corrections or as a further complicating factor in a coded section of text. In the first case we are dealing with conventional bind-runes and in the second with unconventional. Bind-rune corrections occur on Sigtuna plate 1, Solberga plate 1, the Järfälla plate and possibly on Vassunda plate 3. Bind-runes comprising a form of code occur on the Gorodišče plates, the Ladoga plate, the Roskilde plate, the beginning of Solberga plate 1 and possibly on Sigtuna plate 2. A further number of uninterpreted plates appear to contain many bind-runes (e.g. the Hovgård and Deerness plates). Mindy MacLeod (2002:156) also distinguishes ‘cryptic bind-runes’ in Viking-Age runic inscriptions. She divides these into two groups: ‘same-stave runes’ and ‘runic crosses’ (pp. 157 f., 165 f.) and provides some reliable examples as well as discussing less certain attestations. Neither of these types however occur on runic plates. Samestave runes and runic crosses require a large surface area as is found only on runestones. The cryptic bind-runes of the runic plates may look like conventional bind-runes but differ from these by often occurring in large numbers on the same plate and further by inevitably being one of a number of encoding methods, such as balanced runes or coordinate runes, in the relevant inscription. Bind-runes may therefore be regarded as a further complication in the process of reading these inscriptions rather than a means of encryption in their own right.

Bind-runes are employed in Viking-Age runic inscriptions almost exclusively for corrections. MacLeod (2002:153 f.) summarises her analysis of the Viking-Age bind-runes in the following words:

It can be maintained that the overwhelming majority of bind-runes from the Viking Age (with perhaps some very few exceptions) result from textual emendation, where a rune may originally have been omitted, or wrongly included, and the mistake was most easily remedied by the insertion of one rune bound to another. [- - -] Viking-Age bind-runes can largely be attributed to carver error or oversight. In fact, nearly all of the bind-runes from intelligible texts can be accounted for in this way.

The situation pertaining to the Viking-Age runic plates is very different. Bind-rune corrections seldom occur (three or four examples) and bind-runes are used much more often in the aim of complicating the reading (eight cases). Direct parallels for this are lacking in the Viking-Age monumental material, but there are examples on loose objects of bind-runes being used as a form of encryption, for instance in the inscription on a runic bone from Långgränd in Sigtuna (U NOR1996;17B) which has been read and interpreted by Källström (2010b:77–83). We thus are not entirely lacking in comparative material for the runic plates in this regard.

2.4 Runes with non-graphematic branches

The term ‘runes with non-graphematic branches’ is here used for runes equipped with extra lines devoid of linguistic meaning used to:

- 1) obscure the content of the inscription: ‘cryptic non-graphematic branches’,
- 2) endow the rune or inscription with additional magical power: ‘enhancing non-graphematic branches’,
- 3) decorate the rune: ‘decorative non-graphematic branches’.

It is very difficult to prove the existence of the first case, obscurification. It has been proposed by Elena Mel’nikova (2001:184–188) for the Gorodišče plates and by Börje Westlund (1989:44 f.) for the beginning of the Kvinneby plate. It is important to observe that there are no other undeniable attestations of this form of encryption, which may support Mel’nikova’s and Westlund’s suggestions. Two runestones, U 163 and U 313, discussed by MacLeod (2002:166–169) and Thompson (1975:46) as reliable examples, are assessed by Källström as containing corrections of carving errors rather than encryption of this type (Källström 2007a:209; Källström 2015b).

Some inscriptions nevertheless appear to contain runes with ‘branches’ devoid of linguistic meaning. The impression on seeing the inscriptions on the bone (Figure 7) from Lund or the stone Andreas V from the Isle of Man (Figure 8, IM MM111) is of carving lines not intended to comprise part of the reading but to obscure the content. No certain interpretations have been suggested for either inscription, however. One problem is that while it is extremely easy for a carver to conceal the content of an inscription by adding a multitude of extra lines, it is much more difficult to accomplish this in a way which permits future readers to ‘solve’ the inscription. Readings and interpretations of such inscriptions invite automatic criticism since they show no method for determining which lines are graphematic and which are not.

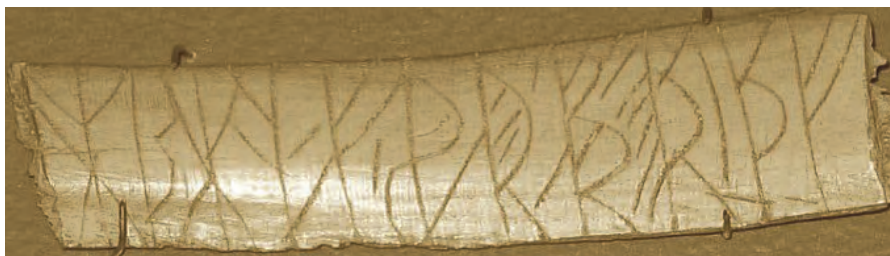


Figure 7. The Lund bone (DR Fv1993;225).



Figure 8. The Andreas V stone (IM MM111, Isle of Man).

There are nonetheless several factors in the case of the Kvinneby plate which suggest that Westlund's proposal is justified (section 3.3.4.1). There are however no convincing reasons to assume such a principle of encryption on the Gorodišče plates (sections 7.2.1.2 and 7.2.1.3).

The second and third purposes are difficult to distinguish from each other. They are also, like the first, difficult to prove. It is sometimes stated that a number of runic plates have enhanced or decorated runes, by which is meant that the branches and/or mainstaves have been multiplied for the purpose of either beautifying the runes or increasing their magical power. Mindy MacLeod (2002:173) calls such runes 'ornamental/multiplied runes'. The most typical variant is the **p**-rune with multiplied bows (two, three and sometimes even four or five bows). Such an identification is proposed by Helmer Gustavson, for example, for unconventional runes in the beginning of Solberga plate 1 and by Jurij Kuz'menko in a runic variant on the Ladoga plate.

It is difficult for scholars to avoid confusing these runes with bind-runes. It may be quite justified to read the sign \mathfrak{F} as an enhanced **t** in one context (on the Zealand bracteate DR IK98 there is hardly a better solution, cf. MacLeod & Mees 2004), while in another context (e.g. on the Gorodišče plates) it may appear to be a highly unmethodical attempt to eliminate branches which cannot be explained in any other way. One should also be aware of other possibilities which may require repetition of runes, such as various encoded magic spells of the same type as the *pistill-mistill* formula.³²

³² See e.g. Düwel (2008:98 f.) on this formula.

I do not wish to take a position on the extent to which conceptions of magic and/or ornamental intentions underlie the enhanced or decorated runes, but simply affirm that runes with multiplied branches occur in older (e.g. the Kylver stone G 88) and Viking-Age runic inscriptions (e.g. the Malt stone DR NOR1988;5). It is therefore feasible that they may also be encountered in Viking-Age runic plates. Great caution must nevertheless be exercised prior to any suggestion that a given rune is in fact decorated or enhanced with non-graphematic branches, and it is necessary to first confirm that it cannot be read as a bind-rune.

2.5 Coordinate runes

The term *coordinate runes* was proposed by Marco Bianchi (2010:117 f.) for all the types of runes based on the same number code resulting from the division of the futhark (whether 24-type or 16-type) into three families (*ættir*, which are counted backwards), and subsequent identification of each rune by two numbers: the number of the *ætt* and the number of the rune within the *ætt*. The two coordinates thus obtained allow the reader to identify the specific rune. Runes encrypted in this way can of course appear in many different guises, which is the reason I prefer Bianchi's term as the superordinate designation. Unlike other terms (*ice runes*, *twig runes* etc.), it derives from the principle itself rather than the appearance of the runes. Bianchi briefly describes the names and appearance of the different types of coordinate runes, so it is unnecessary to repeat his work here. A comprehensive overview of *Geheimrunen* (i.e. coordinate runes) is also provided by Düwel (2008:183–188).

It has been suggested that some runic plates may contain coordinate runes. Magnus Olsen (1940:13 f.) and Hugo Pipping (1933:10) both suggest that the last part of the inscription on Sigtuna plate 1 may contain ice runes; Arthur Nordén (1943:160) suggests that side B of Sigtuna plate 2 may contain a number of twig runes; Elena Mel'nikova (2001:180–188) regards the Gorodišče plates as containing two twig runes. There are twig runes on the Roskilde plate according to Ivar Lindquist (1932:66 f., fn. 1), while Magnus Källström (2014b:4) cautiously suggests the same for the Sunnerby plate. Bruce E. Nilsson (1976:242 f.) suggests that the depiction of a fish on the Kvinneby plate is a twig rune.

It is sufficient for our purposes to confirm that the use of coordinate runes is well attested as a method of encryption on both runestones and portable objects during the Viking and Middle Ages. Examples of securely read and interpreted twig runes occur on the runestones Ög 136, Sö 47, Sö 112, Sö 130, Sö 164, Sö 167, Sö 170, Sö 352, Sö 367 and Sö Fv1948;295. There are clear ice runes on U 1165. There are also reliably read and interpreted twig runes on the inscriptions from Maeshowe (see e.g. Or Barnes20 in Barnes 1994a: 147 f.). It is evident that there are no certain attestations of coordinate runes

occurring in isolation on runestones (Or 4, Or 5 and Or 7 must be disregarded as uncertain examples); they are distinct in this from the inscriptions on portable objects.

Among the portable objects with coordinate runes may be mentioned three rib-bones from Sigtuna, one with twig runes (from the ‘Guldet’ block, U Fv1983;229, see also Sl 9) and the other two with ice runes (the ‘Professorn’ block, U NOR2000;34A resp. U NOR2000;24; see also Sl 91 resp. Sl 72). Coordinate runes can thus be used both to complicate another writing system (whether encrypted or not) and as a system of writing in their own right.

2.6 Balanced runes

It has been proposed that all of the runes of the Ladoga plate are mirror runes (Kuz’menko 1997b), and that some of those of the Gorodišče plates are mirrored (Mel’nikova 2001:184–188). The obverse of Solberga plate 1 also has a number of mirrored runic forms, as do the Eketorp plate, Lund plate 1, the Sunnerby plate and Gamla Uppsala plate 2. I choose to call these runic shapes balanced, since I believe I can show that the principle underlying their composition is not mirroring but balance. The term ‘mirror runes’ is also misleading for another reason: literature on different systems of writing and code reserves the term ‘mirror writing’ for writing signs which change course and then continue in the opposite direction (in runology these would be called inverted runes).

The term ‘Spiegelrunen’ was introduced to runology by Peter Pieper (1987: 67–72) in his proposal to read the word **alu** in the stamps on a group of urns from Spong Hill. The principle for mirror runes is according to Pieper that a rune is given a symmetrical form by being hypothetically placed in front of a mirror. In the same article, Pieper discusses the shape older runes would take in such a mirroring system and exemplifies these theoretical symmetrical runic shapes (Figure 9). A number of mirror runes in Figure 7 are indeed attested in runic inscriptions, namely three in the Spong Hill stamps (**α**, **l** and **u**), two in runic inscriptions on shield-handle mounts from Illerup (**þ**, **w**) and two in futhark inscriptions: a **ᚱ**-rune on a buckle (bow fibula) from Charnay, France, and a **ᚥ**-rune in an inscription on a pillar from Breza, Bosnia. Pieper (pp. 71 f.) further believes that one of the signs on the Meldorf fibula is the “entspiegelt” (‘unmirrored’) rune **d**, i.e. “a not yet mirrored form of the later symmetrised **d**-rune”.³³ If I understand Pieper correctly, he means that the shape of the **d**-rune in the older futhark is actually mirrored and the Meldorf fibula shows its original, unmirrored shape (which means that **d** in Pieper’s presentation, Figure 9, should be replaced by its ‘unmirrored’ variant). The sixteen remaining runes – or rather seventeen, as I do not consider the **d**-rune in the Meldorf

³³ “eine noch nicht gespiegelte Form der später symmetrifizierten **d**-Rune”

inscription a certain attestation – are not attested in runic inscriptions, however, or have at least not been identified as such.

One problem I see in the categorisation of mirror runes is they must be identified in a lexical inscription or in a context which leaves no room for doubt about their use. The futhark inscriptions (Charnay and Breza) lend themselves to the latter purpose, since the runes can be identified by their placement in the rune-row. The stamped **alu**-formulas may also be accounted good examples of a comprehensible reading and interpretation. The same applies in principle to the inscription on the Ladoga plate; this must at least be partly lexical since it obviously contains the word **runar**. This inscription would thus offer a unique opportunity to fill in some of the gaps in Pieper's presentation if it were only possible to obtain a certain reading and interpretation of the other runes on the plate. It is therefore of great importance to investigate these runes as carefully as possible.

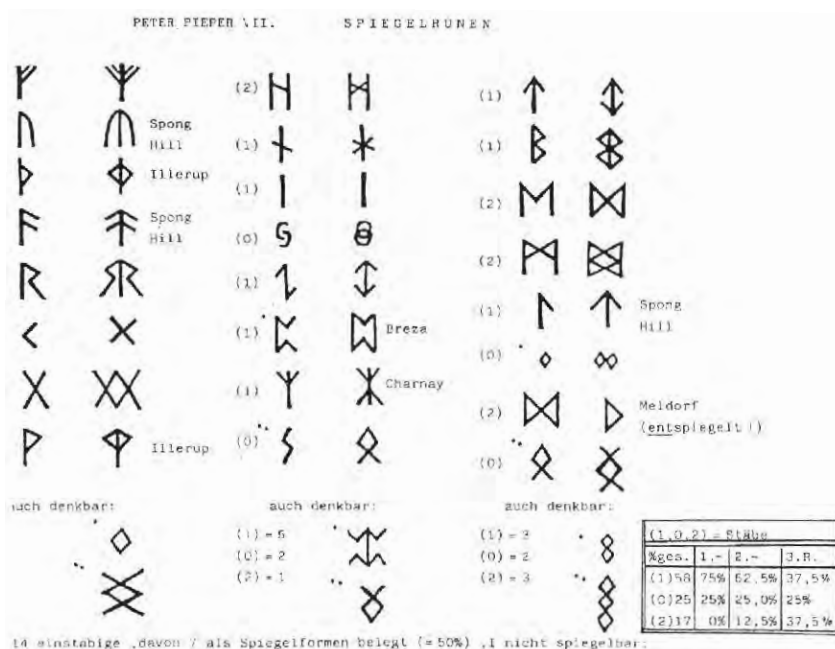


Figure 9. Pieper's (1987:71) exemplification of the hypothetical forms of the mirror runes.

Another way to fill in the gaps in the presentation is to follow Pieper's example and create hypothetical runic shapes. But to be able to identify these, should they actually ever appear, we should first be sure that we have properly understood the principle underlying the creation of the runic shapes. The first step must thus be a discussion of the principles behind the creation of mirror runes. Understanding of this principle, however, requires additional reliable attestations, which easily results in a circle argument. We namely risk first identifying runic shapes based on our own ideas of how mirror runes ought to look, i.e.

based on a hypothesis rather than any deeper understanding of their structure; we thereafter develop an understanding of their principles by building on these specially chosen attestations. The understanding of this principle thus need not be correct since runes which did not look like mirror runes, i.e. which did not confirm the original hypothesis, were never included in the analysis.

I will illustrate this with one example: on the Ladoga plate, as mentioned above, is the comprehensible and unambiguous runic sequence **runar**. The first four runes may be regarded as mirror runes, leaving the final rune (𐐚) unexplained. If **r** had been mirrored, the result would have been 𐐚. There is however already an **m** shaped like this in the inscription, and the carver cannot therefore assign the same shape to **r** as well. The question is why the carver modified the appearance of the **r**-rune at all. Why not allow it to retain its original shape 𐐚 (which moreover could not be confused with any other runic shape) and why remove part of the runic stave: the runic shape 𐐚 is not mirrored by being deprived of its stave. We can confirm that the shape of the **r**-rune thereby falls outside of the presumed mirror rune paradigm or that in any case it is flawed. The same kind of flaw occurs in one of Pieper's own examples, namely the **p**-rune in the futhark inscription from Breza in Bosnia. Mindy MacLeod (2002: 116 fn. 133) observes that the rune "is usually read as an allograph of 𐐚, although it can be remarked that a true 'mirror' version would be 𐐚 or 𐐚 rather than 𐐚."

It is thus necessary to establish the principle by which the so-called mirror runes were created, particularly if we wish to recreate their graphematic system and suggest hypothetical runic shapes which are not attested anywhere. Pieper assumes that the principle consists of providing the rune with a mirror image; he also notes (1987:70) that "single-stave runes are most suitable for mirroring in the sense of a 'symmetrification' of the usual runic shapes",³⁴ i.e. the runes **f, u, þ, a, r, w, n, p, z/r, b, i, t** and **l**. He further assumes that runes with two mainstaves (**h, e, m** and **d**) are less suited to mirroring, since this endows them with a third stave; but "nevertheless possible would be a more 'internal' mirroring of the branches."³⁵ He states that the mirror form of runes devoid of staves (**k, g, j, s, ȝ** and **o**) is unnecessarily complicated, but the principle underlying mirroring nevertheless forces him to suggest examples (e.g. 𐐚). The runes with two staves should in line with his principle acquire a third stave, e.g. the **e**-rune should have taken the shape 𐐚 instead of 𐐚. As Pieper himself observes, his principle does not explain why the same mirroring principle cannot be applied to all runes and why we lack attestations of most of the runic shapes found in his presentation.

We can however reconstruct a different principle which does not force a division into runes which are more and less suited to the principle, and we are then freed from lists of complicated runic shapes which are not actually at-

³⁴ "Geeignet für eine Spiegelung im Sinne einer 'Symmetrifikation' der gewöhnlichen Runenform sind in erster Linie einstabige Runen."

³⁵ "möglich wäre immerhin eine mehr 'interne' Spiegelung der Zweige"

tested. The principle I suggest is *balance*. The crucial factor for complete balance in a rune is firstly that it shows symmetry between its left and right side, and secondly shows the same symmetry between its upper and lower component (top and base). A rune balanced on its left and right side as well as between its upper and lower components automatically has its focal point in the middle.

I have deliberately listed the points in this order since I believe that the first point is more important than the second for runic balance in the envisaged system. When the runes are balanced, they take as it were one step towards balance (and in this system never two), and the steps are prioritised in this particular order. If we imagine a rune which lacks balance between its right and left side and between the upper and lower component and thus does not have its focal point in the middle (𐌺), a balanced form is created by taking one step to balance the rune's right and left side (𐌿). If, conversely, a rune is already balanced on the sides, but not between its upper and lower component (𐌶), and therefore similarly does not have its focal point in the middle, its upper and lower components are instead balanced (𐌷). If a rune is balanced on both sides and upper and lower components, it does not need to be balanced (𐌵). I call runes which lack balance (𐌺) *unbalanced*, runes which are balanced on the side (𐌿) *semi-balanced*, and runes with complete balance (𐌵) *fully-balanced*.

One can imagine the runes in this system as standing on a staircase on the way to complete balance (Figure 10).

On the highest stair are runes which are already balanced. On the second-highest stair are semibalanced runes, which can easily take a step upwards through balancing of the upper and lower components. On the lowest stair are unbalanced runes which can undergo balancing of the right and left side. Some unbalanced runes will then immediately join the balanced runes, e.g. 𐌺 and 𐌾; others will end up among the semibalanced runes, e.g. 𐌶 and 𐌷.

The same staircase will look like this (Figure 11) when the runes have been balanced.

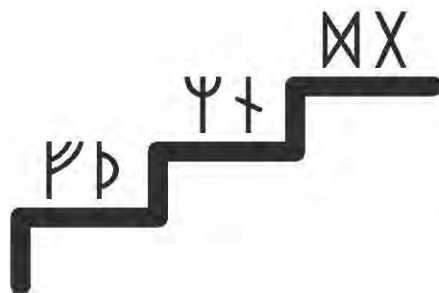


Figure 10. The imagined staircase before balancing.

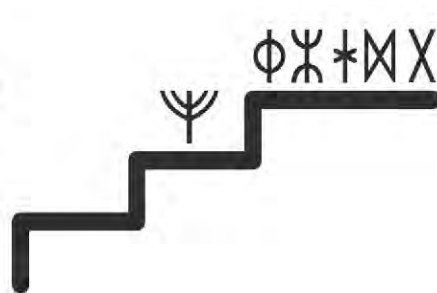


Figure 11. The imagined staircase after balancing.

1) The runes \mathbb{X} | \diamond \mathbb{M} may be accounted fully-balanced runes, i.e. they show symmetry between the right and left side as well as between the top and bottom and therefore do not need to be balanced. The runic shapes \mathbb{X} and \diamond are nevertheless deserving of a special commentary. These runes lack a mainstave but show balance between their left and right side as well as between their upper and lower components; they are therefore placed highest on the staircase. Other runes without staves lack balance either between the sides or between the upper and lower components and are therefore placed among the semibalanced (\mathfrak{S} \mathfrak{X} \mathfrak{Z}) or unbalanced runes (\mathfrak{C} \mathfrak{Z}). The fully-balanced runes do not need to be balanced, and I therefore consider that the runes in this group have no particular ‘balanced form’ at all.

2) Semibalanced runes, i.e. runes which show symmetry between the right and left side, either have branches on both sides of the stave or their weight divided between two staves. As we have seen, they are found on the second stair (Figure 10). They lack balance not between the left and right side but between the upper and lower components. Some lack a focal point in the middle and can therefore be balanced better: \mathbb{H} \mathfrak{t} \mathfrak{l} \mathfrak{Y} \mathfrak{t} \mathbb{M} \mathbb{M} \mathfrak{s} \mathfrak{Z} \mathfrak{X} . After balancing, the semibalanced runes appear as follows: \mathbb{H} \mathfrak{t} \mathfrak{l} \mathfrak{Y} \mathfrak{t} \mathbb{M} \mathbb{M} \mathfrak{s} \mathfrak{Z} \mathfrak{X} . Those runes whose balance cannot be improved (the runes without staves – \mathfrak{X} \mathfrak{s} \mathfrak{Z}) remain among the semibalanced.

Small changes suffice to balance the runes in the second group since these runes already have some form of balance. They can nonetheless be made more stable with the help of inner or lower branches. If a semibalanced rune cannot achieve a better form of balance, or if its shape would then coincide with that of another rune, it remains untouched.³⁶

3) The unbalanced runes, i.e. runes which lack symmetry between their right and left side and can only take the first step towards balance are: \mathfrak{P} \mathbb{N} \mathfrak{b} \mathfrak{f} \mathbb{R} \mathfrak{P} \mathfrak{P} \mathfrak{L} \mathfrak{B} \mathfrak{t} \mathfrak{C} \mathfrak{Z} . After taking one step, they appear as follows: \mathfrak{P} \mathbb{N} \mathfrak{b} \mathfrak{f} \mathbb{R} \mathfrak{P} \mathfrak{P} \mathfrak{L} \mathfrak{B} \mathfrak{t} \mathfrak{C} \mathfrak{Z} . Unbalanced runes are changed in this way to semibalanced (\mathfrak{P} , \mathfrak{P}) or fully-balanced (\mathfrak{b} , \mathfrak{f}). Observe that the \mathfrak{L} -rune in accordance with this principle could also have been balanced as \mathfrak{L} . I reiterate that the runes in this system of balance take only one step towards balance. It is however possible that they would take several steps in other graphematic systems.

I believe that the principle of balance offers a better explanation of the differences in the composition of the various ‘mirror runes’ as well as the absence of some runic shapes; since the runes are balanced rather than mirrored, different runes undergo different processes, while runes which do not need balancing or cannot be balanced remain unchanged. The new principle also explains the shape of the runes \mathfrak{r} on the Ladoga plate and \mathfrak{p} in the Breza in-

³⁶ As is the case with the rune \mathfrak{h} on the Ladoga plate: an attempt to balance the rune \mathfrak{h} would result in a rune resembling \mathbb{H} in balanced form, \mathbb{H} , but this shape is already found in the graphematic system of the Ladoga plate.

scriptions: these are balanced rather than mirrored. I therefore renounce Pieper's terminology in favour of the designations *principle of balance* and *balanced runes* respectively.

I started by applying the principle of balance to the older runes since this principle is attested as early as the proto-Scandinavian Age (the fifth-century Spong Hill inscriptions) and since my point of departure was to question Pieper's principle of mirroring, which he applied to the older runes. The inscription on the Ladoga plate nonetheless belongs to the age of the younger rune-row despite containing some older runes. The inscription on the plate consists mostly of balanced runes, which indicates that a writing system containing balanced runes was available to the carver, or that the carver was attempting to create one.

The younger runes are usually loosely divided into two groups; these are found in Figure 12 with their balanced shapes. It is important to remember that the division of the younger rune-row into short-twig and long-branch types is no more than a convenient tool for runologists rather than a reflection of the actual Viking-Age relationship between different types of runic shapes. We know for example of a large number of runic inscriptions overwhelmingly comprised of long-branch runes which nonetheless contain some short-twig runes (e.g. 's). We also know of several short-twig inscriptions with a long-branch **a**. Attributing a runic inscription to a particular group may be complicated, not only because of this 'typological' mixture in the same inscription but also because not all of the younger futhark's sixteen runes will necessarily occur in the inscription (for this reason it may be difficult to determine which type of runes dominate in an inscription, especially if it is fragmentary).

Long-branch rune-row:

ƿ	ᚋ	ᚑ	ᚕ	ᚖ	ᚗ	✱	†		†	ᚗ	↑	ᚖ	ᚕ	†	ᚗ
ᚘ	ᚙ	᚛	᚞	᚟	ᚠ	✱	✱		✱	ᚗ	↓	ᚖ	ᚕ	†	ᚗ

Short-branch rune-row:

ƿ	ᚑ	ᚕ	ᚖ	ᚗ	ᚘ	†	†		†	†	†	ᚕ	†	†	†
ᚙ	᚛	᚞	᚟	ᚠ	ᚡ	†	†		†	†	↑	ᚕ	†	†	†

Figure 12. The younger runes with their balanced shapes.

While I do not claim that it is impossible to divide runic inscriptions typologically according to runic shapes, I nonetheless believe that an overly simplified picture emerges, along with an inevitably rather crude division, if we force these two rune-rows on the material. I also agree with Barnes (2006: 11–29) that it is problematic to use the abstract, standardised rune-rows which are presented in diverse handbooks and reference books rather than reproducing an unmodified futhark inscription with individual signs. (This applies to both younger and older rune-rows.) The standardised younger futharks, which cement an erroneous idea that there were several separate

younger writing systems, do not permit us to approach the actual writing environment in which the carvers operated. Abstract runic shapes (and even abstract rune-rows) are nevertheless practical in the discussion of a principle and are used in establishing the balance principle based on the standard shapes of the older runes.

The principle of balance, as already observed, can be applied to both older and younger runes, but a principle does not necessarily lead to a complete system. Nor have I attempted to propose a writing system for balanced runes, since this would entail taking a position on different runic shapes and presumably favouring one over another. I thus make a distinction between the concepts of *writing principle* and *writing system*. While no system lacks principles, the reverse is not necessarily true. An interesting writing principle, such as balancing runes, may be invented but never developed into a consistent graphematic system. In order to create a functional system, more than a basic principle is required: this must also be applied to all graphemes in the derived system and in such a way that all graphemes have distinctive features and can be divided into a number of minimal graphic pairs. A functional system is not created by the mechanical application of the balance principle to a lone short-twig or long-branch rune-row. Here I see similarities with the principle underlying the staveless runes, which presumably was applied to a kind of ‘mixed’ younger rune-row featuring both long-branch runes (𐀓, 𐀔) and short-twig runes (𐀕, 𐀖). We cannot therefore determine whether the staveless writing system derives from the long-branch or short-twig runes (but see Fridell 2000, who suggests that the staveless rune-row may derive from the long-branch rune-row).

The same applies to the writing system of the balanced runes: the principle of balance must have been applied to a kind of ‘mixed’ younger rune-row. I call this ‘mixed’ not because the carver intentionally mixed together two or more writing systems, but because we are so used to the strict division that we call normal unstandardised rune-rows ‘mixed’ if they do not exactly conform to our modern standard image. I applied the principle of balance to the two standardised rune-rows above primarily to show the reader how they could look. Here I want to instead remind readers, in the words of Barnes (2006:14): “First, while it may be hard to do away entirely with standardised futharks for the learner, they should, much as cigarettes, be accompanied by an appropriate health warning.”

I consequently do not discuss further conceivable runic shapes for the younger ‘mixed’ rune-row, such as dandelion-**m** (𐀓), double-sided **b** (𐀔) or various forms of **o**. It is easy to observe that the shapes of some of the mechanically balanced runes would coincide. This applies for example to **m** and **n** in the long-branch rune-row, but also **a** and **n** in long-branch form would have overlapped with **h**; dandelion-**m** in balanced form would furthermore have coincided with long-branch **b** in balanced form. The best solution, as regards **a** and **n**, would be to utilise their short-twig forms; **t** and **l** are conversely more

suitable for use in their long-branch forms. The double-sided short-twig runes **o** and **b** would also coincide, for which reason either a long-branch form of the **b**-rune (**B**) or the unilateral short-twig forms of **o** and **b** should have been preferred.

It is my hope that this discussion contributes to a better understanding of the principle of balance, and that it can help to establish a more assured reading of the balanced runes on the Ladoga plate, as well as of runes which appear to be balanced on other runic plates.

2.7 Runiforms, rune-like signs and rune-like markings

The term *rune-like signs* covers normal writing signs which are intended to look like runes but which are not runes. These can only occur in environments where runic writing is known, and it is generally held that the carvers of such rune-like signs were attempting to create runes despite having no real knowledge of them (this is rather difficult to prove). It is therefore often difficult to draw a boundary between cryptic runes and rune-like signs. For this reason, I prefer to instead employ the term *runiforms*, which is restricted in its application to signs reminiscent of runes (which nevertheless cannot be identified as conventional or unconventional runes) rather than a description of anything vaguely rune-like. Runiforms may conceal principles of writing which are unknown to us. For example, some signs on the Hovgård plate look like distorted runes; they are therefore justifiably called runiforms rather than runes. The surrounding runes indicate nonetheless that the carver of the Hovgård plate was familiar with runes and possibly also other systems of code, for which reason it is unsuitable to simply label the plate's 'distorted runes' *rune-like signs*.

I do nonetheless employ the term *rune-like markings* in the cases of carving lines which although reminiscent of runes do not look like runic signs. This applies for example to Solberga plates 4 and 5, which have carving lines which can be called both rune-like and ornamental.

2.8 Conclusions

This overview shows that parallels among inscriptions with established readings and interpretations may be found for some of the runic plates' unconventional runic shapes, e.g. coordinate runes and staveless runes. For others, e.g. runes with ungraphematic branches, indisputable examples are lacking in comparative material. There are some proven examples of bind-runes being used to complicate a reading, as well as of balanced runes, which shows that these were possible ways of complicating lexical inscriptions. I have also discussed the

older runes which indubitably occur in transitional inscriptions and the contexts in which older runes are used in Viking-Age inscriptions. The investigation helps us in some cases to suggest more reliable readings of the unconventional runes on the runic plates. I propose in the overview the term *balanced runes* as a replacement for the term *mirror runes*.

3 Swedish A-type runic plates with linguistic interpretations

...--stu · niþir · ok · raþ · runur · si
[Sæ]ztu niðr ok rāð, rūnar sē!
‘Sit down and interpret, see the runes!’
Vg Fv1992;172

Five runic plates from Swedish territory can be classified as Type A (pendants). These are the Hallbjäns plate, Sigtuna plate 1, the Kvinneby plate and Solberga plates 1 and 2. The most striking aspect of these plates is that four of them are said to contain spells against ‘giants or trolls’ (the exception is the Kvinneby plate). In the following, we will investigate whether this is actually the case and attempt to improve upon the interpretations for some of the inscriptions.

3.1 The Hallbjäns plate (G 361), Gotland

3.1.1 Find circumstances

Due to its archaeological dating, this copper plate (Figure 13) can be considered the oldest in the corpus. It was discovered in 1965 during archaeological excavations of a burial mound (feature 2/65 at Hallbjäns, Sundre parish) which has been dated to the eighth century. The plate is kept at SHM under inventory number 32403:16.

The excavations were led by Sture Engquist, and the dating to the eighth century (or rather its first half) is based on other objects in the grave (see description of these in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:186). The grave goods indicate a female grave. The plate is 41.3 mm long, 10.4 mm wide and 0.6 mm thick. It is preserved in its entirety and has a round hole with a diameter of 2.7 mm placed in the lower left corner.

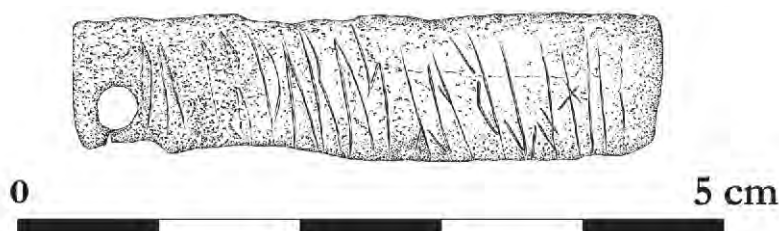


Figure 13. The Hallbjäns plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

3.1.2 Earlier readings and suggested interpretations

The inscription occurs only on the obverse and has been investigated by Helmer Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:186–191; apart from some small changes, the same text is found in *GR* 3, G 361) as well as by Thorgunn Snædal (2002:43–45). The transliteration by Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:187 f.) is: **þunurþurus ʒ ---hatrn--**. Snædal's (2002:43) is: **þunurþurus ʒ ---aatrn--**.

The inscription is not divided into rows but shows a change in the direction of reading; the runes **þunurþurus** are read first, from left to right, from the plate's left short side, whereupon the plate is turned 180 degrees and the remaining runes are read from the plate's other short side, also here from left to right. In the catalogue (no 15) the change in reading direction is marked by arrows. Because of the great age of the inscription, the transliteration of ʒ and ʒ is problematic: the so-called transitional inscriptions (from the period 600–800) use the rune ʒ for oral /a/ while ʒ represents nasal /ǣ/. Both signs are found with these values on the Avnslev stone (DR 189 †), Flemløse stone 1 (DR 192), the Snoldelev stone (DR 248), the Örja stone (DR 333) and the Sölvesborg stone (DR 356). We also find ʒ for /a/ on the Tune stone (DR 249 †) and the Høje-Tåstrup stone (DR 250). The same applies to the Ribe skull (DR EM85; 151B), which has been archaeologically dated to c. 700–750. In some of these inscriptions, ʒ represents /h/ while ʒ is used as an allograph of ʒ /a/.

The earliest examples of ʒ being used for /h/ occur in the inscriptions on the Gørlev stone (DR 239) and the Birka silver amulet (U ANF1937;163); the reading of the latter is uncertain however, as a convincing interpretation is lacking. Both have been dated to the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century. The transliteration of the Hallbjäns plate as ---aotr-- is thus preferable for the second part of the inscription, although ---hotr-- cannot be dismissed. Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:188) nevertheless makes the surprising choice to regard ʒ as oral /a/ (to judge from his interpretation, see below). We lack attestations of the rune ʒ representing /a/ or /h/ in a system where ʒ simultaneously represents oral /a/.

Gustavson provides several interpretational possibilities for the inscription. He is keen to discern in the runic sequence **þurus** runSw. *þurs* m. 'giant, demon, troll' with a svarabhakti vowel [u] between **r** and **s**. After some hesitation, he suggests that the runic sequence **þunur** might be a variant *þunarr* of the theonym *Þōrr*, which would then correspond to the eighth century form *þunor* of Old English and to the form *thonar* of Old High German. In this case, **þunurþurus** could represent 'thunder-troll'. Gustavson omits any mention of the name **wigiponar** which is attested on the Bavarian Nordendorf fibula (McKinnell & al. 2004:48), dated to the mid-sixth century: this has been interpreted as 'Battle-Donar' or 'Dedicating-Donar' and probably alludes to Thor. The suggested runic **u** between **n** and **r** in Gustavson's proposed **þunur** is difficult to explain. The principles of word formation lead Gustavson to dismiss the idea that it could be an epenthetic vowel, but he defends his interpretation

by mentioning that ogres could be associated with noise and uproar and refers to the expression *þrymiandi þurs* ‘howling troll’ which is attested on Solberga plate 1 (see section 3.4.3). The second possibility he proposes is to interpret the noun **punur** as formed from the root of an adjective corresponding to Olcel. *þunnr* (<**þunnu-*) ‘thin, fine, fragile’ with an original meaning of ‘(out)stretched’; the lexeme *-r* would have been suffixed to this to denote a particular characteristic of the ogre. Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:190) nonetheless admits that he cannot provide “any suggestion of how the word can be explained in more detail on the basis of this etymology.”³⁷

An interpretation is also proposed for the runic sequence ---**hatrn**---. The sequence is preceded by three straight mainstaves, which Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:190) chooses to regard “as a thrice-carved *ice*-rune, carved with a magical purpose to destroy the ogre.”³⁸ He is led to this interpretation following comparison with three similar straight strokes on Sigtuna plate 1, which were interpreted in this way by Ivar Lindquist (1936:31). In section 3.2.4.4, I discuss why it is unlikely that the signs on the two plates are runic ideographs.

The final two runes in the sequence are read by Gustavson in several different ways (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:188): **im**, **ir** and **lk**. He suggests the interpretation *hatr nim* for the variant **hatr nim**, with a noun corresponding to Olcel. *hatr* n. ‘persecution, hatred, enmity’ and a verb corresponding to Olcel. *nema* ‘take, get, reach, obtain’ in 2 pers. sg. The proposal in its entirety reads: “Thunder-ogre, receive persecution (i.e. destruction)! ”³⁹ This is entirely based on the author’s assumption that the plate contains a spell against an ogre or a demon, and that the inscription therefore might begin with a direct address which uses an adjective to define the ogre (**punurþurus**) to increase the effectiveness of the expulsion, followed by a banishment phrase through which the demon is cursed (**hatr nim**).

Gustavson nonetheless considers it problematic that the word *hatr* does not otherwise occur in “the vocabulary of incantation formulas”,⁴⁰ although he maintains that the word is used in the sense of ‘aggressive frame of mind’⁴¹ on the runestone Sm 37. He also considers that the meaning of the verb *nema* is unclear in this expression, since its meaning varies from ‘take’ to ‘allot’. A conclusive interpretation can therefore be provided only when **punurþurus** has been convincingly interpreted.

Gustavson does not consider it impossible to find epenthetic [u] in Viking-Age inscriptions; rather, there is good evidence of this, e.g. in the runSw. word *brōðir* (examples are provided by Gustavson on p. 189) or in names

³⁷ “[n]ågot förslag om hur ordet närmare skall kunna sakligt förklaras utifrån denna etymologi”

³⁸ “som en trefalt ristad *is*-runa, som i magiskt syfte ristats för att förjunta tursen”

³⁹ “Dunderturs, mottag förföljelse (dvs. undergång)! ”

⁴⁰ “besvärjelseformlernas ordförråd”

⁴¹ ‘fientligt sinnelag’

such as **puruti** *Prōtti* (U 17) and **purot** *Prōnd* (U 1127 – these are my examples). In my opinion it is likely that the runic sequence **puṇurṇpurus** contains the epenthetic vowel [u], and it thus appears probable that epenthetic vowels occur in both parts of the runic sequence. Gustavson's suggested interpretation of the second part is problematic, not in its choice of vocabulary or the meaning assigned to the verb but primarily in its reading of the rune ṇ as oral /a/. I propose instead the following transliteration (see my comments in the catalogue, no 15):

A: →**ṇu[ṇur]purus** ¶ ←---**ṇotrṇi-**
 1 5 10 15 20

Despite its undoubted lexicality, I offer no interpretation of the inscription. The runic sequence **otr** could conceal words with many sound combinations, not least /andr/ or /antr/. Rune 20 may in principle be connected with the sequence **purus** to form **purusr** (see my comments in the catalogue). There are thus several potential ways of tackling the inscription.

3.2 Sigtuna plate 1 (U Fv1933;134), Uppland

3.2.1 Find circumstances

This copper plate (Figure 14) with a square-shaped hole on the tapering short side was found in March 1931 in Sigtuna. The plate is 82 mm long, 27.5–29 mm wide and c. 1 mm thick. It is kept at SHM with the inventory number 19692. The plate was discovered in the ‘Granhäcken’ block. Ivar Lindquist (1932:8–10) provides a detailed description of the find circumstances as well as of other discoveries made together with the plate. He records that the object was found at a depth of c. 1.2 metres. In August of the same year, Lindquist (1932:10), together with his assistant Erik Flodérus, undertook an archaeological investigation of the site but found nothing new of interest.

On the basis of the other finds, Manne Eriksson and Delmar Olof Zetterholm (1933:137) suggest that the plate may have comprised grave goods. They refer to Hallström (1922–1924:1–13), whose excavations near the find place uncovered a cremation grave and inhumation graves, all of which he considered pagan. According to Erik Flodérus (Lindquist 1932:10) the plate was not found in a grave, however, but in “old backfill taken from the city’s mediaeval cultural layer”.⁴² Lindquist (1932:8) also describes rows of stones below the ground, which indicate housing sills rather than a grave. The supposition that the plate may derive from a pagan grave became popularly accepted nonetheless, e.g. by Arthur Nordén (1943:169). I therefore wish to investigate the problem more closely.

⁴² “gammalt fyllnadsmaterial, hämtat från stadens medeltida kulturlager”

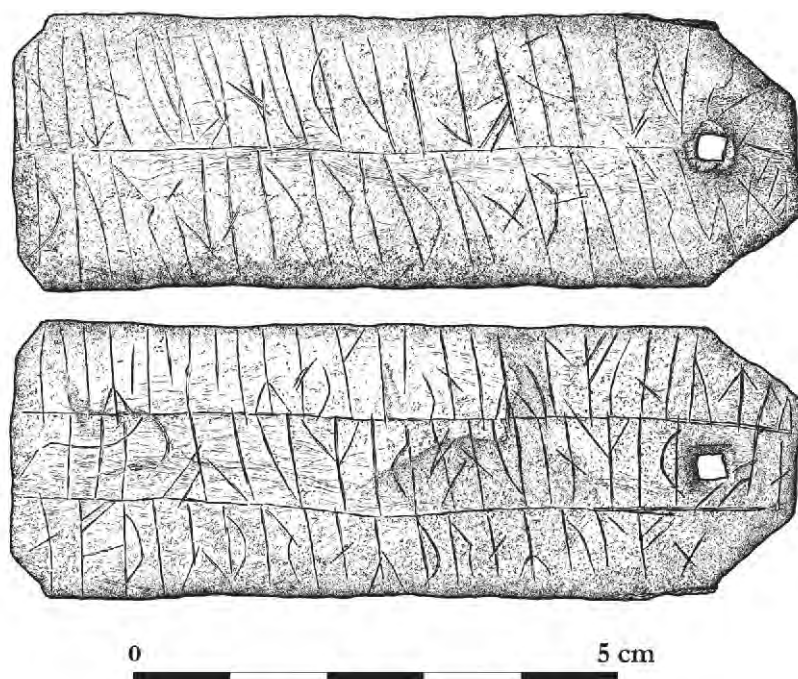


Figure 14. Sigtuna plate 1. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

There is nothing in the find context unambiguously indicative of a grave; the pottery fragments and bone combs are just as readily encountered in an urban environment as in a cemetery, and as mentioned above, the rows of stones are rather suggestive of a house. There is moreover no reason to assume that the putative grave was pre-Christian. It is often problematic to distinguish between Christian and pre-Christian graves, even when sites can be definitely established to be graves (Nilsson 1996:365–368, 381). Hallström’s conclusion (1922–1924:9) that the inhumation graves he investigated were pagan is based on the premise that Christian graves would not “have been placed beside pagan cremation graves during a time when religious zeal was so fanatical”.⁴³ This assumption has however been criticised by Anne-Sofie Gräslund (1989:35 f.), who gives examples during the transitional period – which she describes as a long and gentle process, by no means as fanatical as Hallström likes to think – of ‘half-Christian’ (and possibly even Christian) individuals being buried in pagan cemeteries. Gräslund further shows that beyond the cremation grave which Hallström excavated there is information about only two further cremation graves in Sigtuna. One of these cases in fact consisted only of pottery shards found in 1924 in the ‘Granhäcken’ block. The information comes from

⁴³ “ha lagts sida vid sida med hedna brandgravar under en tid, då religionsnitet var så fanatiskt”

Flodérus, according to whom the shards derived from an urned cremation.⁴⁴ (It is interesting to observe here that this same Flodérus considered that Sigtuna plate 1 was not linked to a grave.) The second case concerns a cairn with the remains of burnt layers in the vicinity of the Sigtuna Foundation (Gräslund 1989:37). Gräslund (p. 37) summarises her report with the eminently reasonable conclusion that “our grounds for speaking about an older stage with cremation graves are thus fairly flimsy”.⁴⁵ Similarly fragile are the reasons for describing the Sigtuna plate as deriving from a pagan grave. Cremation graves are notable by their absence in the archaeology of Sigtuna, with the exception of the questionable examples discussed above. Instead, all indications are that Sigtuna was founded as a Christian city from the beginning (Tesch 2007a:249–251; 2007b:93, 101–107). The new pilot surveys (Tesch 2006; Wikström 2009) carried out in the ‘Granhäcken’ block in 1985 and 2006 have uncovered no pre-Christian objects or graves, but only the remains of early mediaeval settlement, including stone-foundation houses. We must therefore leave the question of the plate’s origin without a clear answer; we should however assume that it was carved in a Christian context and derives from a residential environment.

3.2.2 Earlier readings and interpretations

The inscription covers both sides and consists of two rows on the obverse and three on the back. The reading order is boustrophedon. The runes are of long-branch type with occasional staveless variants; there is also a bind-rune resulting from a correction. The inscription is carved very carefully and clearly: it contains several corrections, and the final three runes, for which there was no room on the reverse, are carved between rows 1 and 2 on the front.

The inscription attracted much interest in runological circles in the 1930–40s, resulting in interpretations from six scholars: Ivar Lindquist in short newspaper reports in *Svenska Dagbladet* (three from 1931) as well as in a monograph and an article (1932, 1936), Manne Eriksson and Delmar Olof Zetterholm (1933), Hugo Pipping (1933), Magnus Olsen (1940) and finally Arthur Nordén (1943). The plate has become well-known and for this reason is often referred to not only in runological literature but also in other works dealing with the Viking view of the world.

Despite the many attempts at interpretation, the runes on the plate have been examined only by Lindquist, Eriksson and Zetterholm, and for this reason there are only two drawings of the plate:⁴⁶ one was made by Lindquist in

⁴⁴ Gräslund (1989:37) comments that it may have been “a burnt layer with an urn; urned graves are a very uncommon form of grave during the Viking Age” (“ett brandlager med urna; urnegrav är en mycket ovanlig gravform under vikingatiden”).

⁴⁵ “Vårt underlag för att tala om ett äldre skede med brandgravar är således synnerligen bräckligt.”

⁴⁶ Photographs of the plate are found in all of these publications, in addition to Pipping 1933. A further purely decorative drawing is found in MacLeod & Mees (2006:119).

correspondences with the Canterbury formula in my opinion strongly indicate that it is the god Thor (**pur**) who is first named in the inscription.”⁴⁹ Eriksson and Zetterholm also identify *Thor* in the introduction and amend the end of row 2 on side A to agree with the Canterbury formula. Gerd Høst (1952:342–347) goes as far as to call the Sigtuna plate a copy of the Canterbury formula. She suggests (p. 346) that “the Sigtuna plate’s **sarriþu** is a miscopying of **saruiþr** with confusion of **u** and **r** as in **trrtin** (corrected to **trutin**) in the same formula.”⁵⁰

Other texts have also influenced interpretations of the Sigtuna plate. Nordén was thus inspired by Jungner’s interpretation of the inscription on the Högstena plate and suggested (1943:169) that the Sigtuna inscription was also a spell against revenants.

A similar text which has not, however, influenced interpretations of the Sigtuna plate, since it was first discovered much later, is the inscription on the so-called fever-bone from Sigtuna (U NOR1998;25). The transliteration, normalisation and interpretation are by Gustavson (2010:64, 69, 71): I reproduce these with some small printing errors corrected.⁵¹ The first two words of the introduction have been given a new interpretation by Källström (2012a:37–43), which I provide after the forward slashes in the normalisation and translation:

A: ----- ¶ iorils × ouriþ × uaksna ur : kroke × bat han × riþu × bar-...
 B: han : riþu × aok × siþa × sarþ × sararan × uara × hafir × fult ¶ fekit × fly : braot riþa

Iōrils vrið/Iōrils ðvrið! Vaksna ūr Krōki! Bant hann riðu, barði(?) hann riðu. Ok siða(?) sarð sāra-rann. Vara hafir (hann) fullt fengit. Flȳ braut riða!

Jorill’s (wound)stick/Joril’s abnormal stomach-ache! Grow out of Krok! He (i.e. the enchanter) bound the fever, crushed(?) the fever. And the sorcery destroyed the wound-house. (He) has completely caught the pus. Flee away, fever!⁵²

I cite the inscription on the fever-bone here in order to refer to it in the following text as well as to show that this type of incantation against disease, primarily fever, was by no means foreign to Sigtuna.

⁴⁹ “Overensstemmelsene med Canterbury-formelen taler efter min mening bestemt for at det er guden Tor (**pur**) som nevnes først i innskriften.”

⁵⁰ “Sigtunaplatens **sarriþu** er feilkopiering for **saruiþr** med forveksling av **u** og **r** som i **trrtin** (rettet til **trutin**) i samme formel.”

⁵¹ I mark with dashes the eight cryptic runes above the first row on the obverse. I further reproduce the punctuation mark (:) which is missing between the words **fly** and **braot**. In the normalisation I correct *hafir* to *hafir*; in the translation I change Kroke to Krok and place the pers. pron. ‘he’ in brackets in the penultimate sentence since it does not occur in the inscription.

⁵² “Jorills (sår)pinne/Jorils abnorma vred! Väx ur Krok! Han (dvs. besvärjaren) band febern, krossade(?) febern. Och sejdandet gjorde slut på sårhuset. (Han) har fångat varet fullständigt. Fly bort feber!”

3.2.2.1 Ivar Lindquist's interpretations from 1932 and 1936

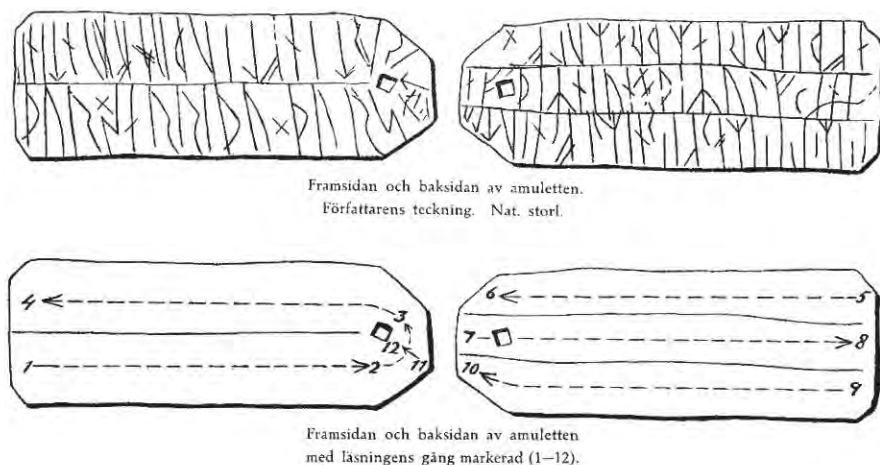


Figure 15. Sigtuna plate 1. Lindquist's drawing (1932, Pl. 3).

The inscription was initially published by Lindquist in a series of articles (1931a–c) containing both readings and interpretations of the runes. The following year, his next interpretation of the plate was published in a comprehensive monograph (1932); this diverges from his final version (1936) only in the third row of the B-side. Lindquist seems to have normalised the inscription into Old Swedish. I reproduce his normalisation below, but replace acute accents with macrons (1936:44):

*Purr sārriþu, þursa drōttinn,
fliū þū nū! Fundinn es(tu).
(H)af þær þrīar þrāar, ulfr!
(H)af þær nū nōþir, ulfr!
Īss, Īss, Īss.
Es ēr þæ(r)'s ĩ sēr ok es unīr ulfr. Niūt lyfia!*

In the first group of runes – **pur** × **sarriþu** × – Lindquist (1936:39) identifies the name of the demon, *Purr sārriþu* 'Wound-fever's Turr'. His reading of row 2 on side A continues (p. 40): *þursa drōttinn! Fliū þū nū! Fundinn es(tu)* 'Lord of trolls! You flee now! You are found.' The personal pronoun 'you' is missing at the end of row 2, as well as the **t**-rune required to form *est* 'are' in 2 pers. sg. pres. ind. The supplementation of *(tu)*, although reasonable, is clearly influenced by the Canterbury formula.

In the first row on side B, Lindquist (1932:54) interprets the runic sequence **afþir** as the verb *hafa* (with loss of *h*), 2 pers. sg. imp. *haf*, with pleonastic dative *þær* 'you' (1936:41): 'Have three torments, 'wolf', have nine needs, 'wolf!' He assumes (1932:77 f., 1936:35, 45) that the incantation is directed against a demon of childbirth fever who torments women giving birth. He further regards the word *ulfr* as a form of address for the 'lord of trolls' and per-

haps for this reason places it within quotation marks – ‘wolf’. It thus designates the same demon of disease which causes torment to women.

The end of rows 2 and 3 on side B greatly diverge in 1936 from Lindquist’s first attempt at interpretation. The crux is that Lindquist earlier read the staveless **r**, **u** and **p**-runes in these rows as different marks of punctuation, and thus arrived at the following text (1932:68, 71):

īñi īšīr · is isīra > kis > nīr > īf < niut lufia

Inni īsīr, es īsīr-a gēs. Nī(g)r, ef niūt lyfi-a

You fear the reader of the formula, who does not fear the progress (of the demons). You drop down dead, if he would not cure the bearer (i.e. of the amulet).⁵³

By his second attempt, Lindquist had changed his mind and adopted the suggestion by Eriksson & Zetterholm (originally by Otto von Friesen) that the inscription contained staveless runes. He thus read (1936:43) the end of rows 2 and 3 as:

īīī is īr pīs i sīr auk is unīr ulfr niut lufia

Īss, īss, īss. Es ēr þæ(r)’s ī sēr ok es unīr ulfr. Niūt lyfia!

Ice, ice, ice. It is help for you who looks at it and in whom the wolf wants to stay. Make use of the remedy (healing-formulas?).⁵⁴

He interprets the three **i**-runes as magical repetitions of the *īss*-rune, which “was used to cause death and destruction”.⁵⁵ He further interprets **īīī is īr pīs i sīr** as *Es ēr þæ(r)’s ī sēr* ‘It is help (healing, relief) for you who look at it’. The word ‘help’ is found in the sequence **īr**, which he interprets as OSw. *ēr*. The word *unīr* in the phrase **unīr ulfr** is interpreted as the verb *una* in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. and the meaning considered to be ‘want to stay (in)’. He thus obtains the phrase *ok es unīr ulfr* ‘and in whom the wolf wants to stay’. The final phrase *Niūt lyfia!* is taken from Eriksson & Zetterholm: ‘Make use of the remedy (healing-formulas?)’.

Lindquist’s complete translation is (1936:39–44):

Wound-fever’s Turr, lord of trolls!

You flee now! You are found.

Have three torments, ‘wolf’.

Have nine needs, ‘wolf’.

Ice, ice, ice (the rune of death according to Sigurd Agrell, carved three times for the benefit of humans and to the detriment of the wolf).

⁵³ “Du fasar för formelläsaren, som ej fasar för (demoners) framfart. Du segnar död ned, om han ej skulle bota innehavarinnan (näml. av amuletten).”

⁵⁴ “Īss, iss, iss. Det är hjälp för dig, som ser på det och som ulven vill hålla till i. Drag nytta av läkemedlen (läkeformlerna?).”

⁵⁵ “nyttjats till att framkalla död och fördärv”

It is help (healing, relief) for you who look at this and in whom the wolf wants to stay. Make use of the remedy (healing-formulas?).⁵⁶

Lindquist's interpretation of the three i-runes is problematic, as will be discussed below, since it is based on a system of number magic developed by Sigurd Agrell for his *uthark* theory.⁵⁷ Lindquist (1932:95–101) also considers a magical numbering of the runes which is based on Agrell as well as on Olsen's theories about the number 72.⁵⁸ Lindquist's interpretation of the first row of the inscription on side A can also be called into question: one might wonder whether this actually features a demon named *Turr* rather than any other name or word. Lindquist is of course guided in his suggestions by the Canterbury formula. It is also important to point out that Lindquist, in his attempts at interpretation (1932, 1936), was largely governed by his assumption (1936:32) that the inscription must be composed in "a paralleling verse metre, which [...] appears to be characteristic of the language of magic".⁵⁹ He called this paralleling verse metre 'sorcery form' (*galderform*). Lindquist (p. 42) roundly criticises Eriksson and Zetterholm for their "halting parallelism"⁶⁰ and dismisses their interpretation of row 3 on side B because of this and other presumed stylistic errors while at the same time his final interpretation of row 3 shows neither paralleling verse metre nor regular verse.

3.2.2.2 Manne Eriksson and D. O. Zetterholm's interpretation from 1933

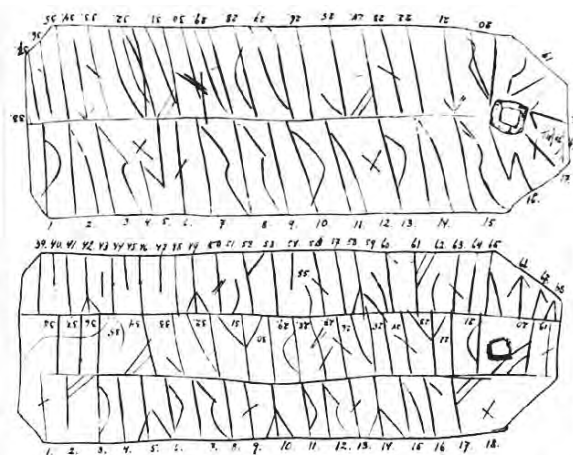


Figure 16. Sigtuna plate 1. Eriksson and Zetterholm's drawing (1933:130 f.).

⁵⁶ "Sårfeberns Turr, trollens förste! / Fly du nu! Funnen är du. / Hav tre plågor, 'ulv'. / Hav nio nöder, 'ulv'. / Iss, iss, iss / Det är hjälp (läkedom, lindring) för dig, som ser på det och som ulven vill hålla till i. Drag nytta av läkemedlen (läkeformlerna?)."

⁵⁷ According to the *uthark* theory, the older rune row represents a code whereby the first rune *f* can be placed last in the row, hence Agrell's designation *uthark*. Each rune is also assigned a magic numerical value. There is no scientific rigour attached to the theory.

⁵⁸ Anders Bæksted (1952:211 f., 285 f.) shows that Olsen's theories on the number 72, like Agrell's on the number system of the *uthark*, are largely baseless. See Bæksted's analysis of the calculations by Lindquist (pp. 235–237).

⁵⁹ "ett parallelliserande versmått, som [...] framstår som karakteristiskt för magiens språk"

⁶⁰ "haltande parallellism"

The interpretation by Manne Eriksson and D. O. Zetterholm (1933) was ready for print by June of 1932 (Lindquist 1932:12, note 1). Lindquist made no use of the article while working on his monograph (1932), although the two authors refer to his work. I have therefore reproduced Lindquist's interpretation first, despite his final version (1936) containing some changes based on the interpretation by Eriksson and Zetterholm.

The authors normalise the inscription into Old Icelandic (1933:145, 156):

Þór særir þú, (?)

þursa dróttinn!

Fly þú nú,

fundinn es(tu)!

Hefðir þriár þrár, ulfr!

Or: *Af þér þriár þrár*

Hefðir nío nauðir, ulfr!

Or: *Af þér nío nauðir, ulfr!*

ósir þess,

ósir eykis!

Unir, ulfr! –

Niót lyfia!

They interpret (p. 145) the first line **þur** × **sarriþu** × **þursa trutin** as 'You wound Thor, (?) lord of trolls!' with the theonym *Thor* as the object of the sentence. The weaknesses of this suggestion include the placement of the **i**-rune in **sarri þu særir þú**, and the lack of expected **ᚱ** in the verb ending in accordance with the orthography of the inscription elsewhere. The authors are of course aware of this weakness (p. 140) and mark the suggestion with a question mark. They further, like Lindquist, supplement the pers. pron. 'you' in their interpretation of row 2: 'You flee now, you are found'.

The first row of side B begins with the sequence **afþir** which they, following a suggestion by Otto von Friesen (p. 141), interpret as the verb 'have' in 2 pers. sg. pret. subj. – *hefðir* – with loss of initial *h*, as occurs in many runic inscriptions in Uppland; they also discuss the possibility of segmenting the runic sequence into the prep. *af* 'of/from' and the dative pers. pron. *þér* 'you'. The line **afþirþriarþrarulf** × and the following **afþirniunopirulfr** can therefore be interpreted as either 'Have yourself three torments, wolf! Have yourself nine afflictions!' or *Af þér þriár þrár ...* 'From you (come) three torments ...'.

The second row ends with three **i**-runes, which the authors (1933:152) explain as a form of amplification, of unclear meaning, for the curse found in the previous lines. Row 3 on side B and the three final runes, which occur on side A, **isir þis isir aukis unir ulfr niut lufia**, are interpreted as *ósir þess, ósir eykis! Unir, ulfr! – Niót lyfia!* 'It drives to that, it drives to increase: Be satisfied with that, troll! – Enjoy the healing!' (or 'Use the sorcery!').

Eriksson and Zetterholm regard the runic sequences **isir** and **unir** as verbs in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. or subj. of *ósa* – 'set in rapid motion' and *una* – 'find calm,

be satisfied'.⁶¹ They explain the word **pis** as *þess* – m. gen. sg. of the pronoun *sá* 'this, that'. The sequence **aukis** is interpreted as a neuter noun in gen. sg. *eykis* 'increase'. It is unclear what is then meant by the phrase 'it drives to that, it drives to increase', although the dubious suggestion is offered that the three torments and nine afflictions are being driven to increase. They interpret (1933: 144) the following phrase **unir ulfr** "as a direct address: [Wolf,] may you be satisfied (with the evil wished upon you in what was said above)."⁶² The final phrase **niut lufia** 'enjoy the healing' is assumed by them to refer to the bearer or, less plausibly, *þursa dróttinn* or *ulfr*, in which case it would be intended ironically. The entire final row is however very difficult to interpret, and I will later discuss it in more detail. The complete interpretation by Eriksson and Zetterholm (translated from the Swedish of the authors) is:

You wound Thor (?), lord of trolls! You flee now, you are found! Have yourself three torments, wolf!	Or: From you (come) three torments.
Have yourself nine afflictions, wolf!	Or: From you (come) nine afflictions.
It drives to that, It drives to increase: Be satisfied with that, troll! – Enjoy the healing!	or: Use the sorcery! ⁶³

To summarise the problems with this interpretation by Eriksson and Zetterholm: the first row requires a better explanation (the position of the *i*-rune is not satisfactory); a convincing interpretation of the third row is also lacking, as the one provided is hardly reasonable. Moreover, wishing that the wolf be satisfied, the same wolf who has previously been cursed with *þriár þrár* and *nío nauðir*, seems improbable, even with the authors' qualification (see fn. 62).

3.2.2.3 Otto von Friesen's 1935 understanding of Eriksson and Zetterholm's interpretation

In the 1935 Christmas edition of *Upsala Nya Tidning*, Otto von Friesen presented his understanding of the possible message of the Sigtuna inscription. He formulated (1935:3) his working method as follows: "On the basis of this

⁶¹ 'sätta i häftig rörelse' and 'ge sig ro, finna sig tillfreds' (Eriksson & Zetterholm's translations)

⁶² "som direkt tilltal: [Ulv,] må du vara tillfreds (med det onda som önskas dig i det ovan sagda)."

⁶³ "Tor sårar du (?), / trollens furste! / Fly du nu, / funnen är du! / Have du tre trånader, ulv! Eller: Från dig (kommer) tre trånader. / Have du nio trångmål, ulv! Eller: Från dig (kommer) nio trångmål. / Det driver därtill, / Det driver till ökning: / Trivs med det, troll! – / Njut läkedom! Eller: Hav nytta av galdern!"

[Eriksson and Zetterholm's] reading and with the free use of their investigations and those of other scholars, one can tentatively propose the following Old Swedish text written in our letters."⁶⁴ I reproduce his normalisation but alter his method of indicating long vowels with ' after the vowel, and change *ö* to *ó*:⁶⁵

<i>Thórr sári,</i>	May Thor hunt you,
<i>thu thúrsa dróttinn.</i>	you lord of trolls.
<i>Flý thu nú!</i>	You flee now!
<i>Fúndinn ós (tu).</i>	You are found (= discovered, neglected, afflicted).
<i>Háfdir thríar</i>	Had you (such) threefold
<i>thráar, úlf(r),</i>	torments (= desire), wolf,
<i>háfdir níu</i>	had you (such) nine
<i>nódir, úlfr;</i>	compulsions, wolf;
<i>ósir tháess,</i>	you covet this (animal),
<i>ósir ókis;</i>	you covet the cattle,
<i>únir úlfr,</i>	stop yourself, wolf, (or)
<i>niút lýfia.</i>	enjoy the spell('s consequence). ⁶⁶

The inscription, according to von Friesen, is directed against wolves, although most likely those conceived of as being sent by evil-intentioned people skilled in magic, which must therefore be driven away with magical actions. The wolf which is repelled in the inscription is thus no normal wolf but (p. 4) "an embodied troll".⁶⁷ The author also discusses the connection between the word *tuss* (which is his translation of the inscription's *purs*) and *varg*. In several Swedish dialects, the word *tuss* designates 'wolf'. Von Friesen regards *ók* as 'a bovine animal': "*Ök* which I read in the third row from the end referred in the old language also to horses used as pack animals or for riding, but of course here it may also refer to cattle used as pack animals."⁶⁸ In von Friesen's interpretation, the god Thor is invoked in the inscription to hunt "the leader of the trolls who may wish harm upon the citizens' cattle."⁶⁹ The author also provides further examples of spells intended to drive away harmful animals, including those aimed specifically at wolves.

Unfortunately von Friesen provides no information on the verb *ósa* or the source of the meaning 'strive for, covet'. His proposed introduction, *Thórr*

⁶⁴ "På grundvalen av denna [Erikssons och Zetterholms] läsning och med fritt anlitande av deras och andra forskares utredningar kan man förslagsvis framställa följande fornsvenska text omskriven med våra bokstäver."

⁶⁵ I retain the vowel length which the author marks in almost every word, despite this sometimes seeming gratuitous, as well as expected in pron. *thu*.

⁶⁶ Tor jage dig / du trollens furste / Fly du nu! / Du är funnen (= upptäckt, eftersatt, hemsökt). / Hade du (så) trefald / trånad (= åtrå), ulv, / hade du (så) nio / nödtvång, ulv; / står du efter detta (djur), / står du efter öket, / hejda dig, ulv, (eller) / njut trolldomen(s påföljd)."

⁶⁷ "ett förkroppsligat troll"

⁶⁸ "*Ök* som jag läser i tredje raden från slutet avser i fornspråket också häst brukad som dragare eller riddjur men naturligtvis kan här också vara fråga om nötkreatur använda som dragare."

⁶⁹ "trollens överste som kan vilja borgarens ök något ont"

sári, is less convincing an explanation of the doubling of the **r**-runes than Lindquist's *sāriða* 'wound-fever', although the idea of regarding the 'wolf' of the inscription as a dangerous wolf sent by a magician does not appear impossible.

3.2.2.4 Hugo Pipping's interpretation from 1933

In the same year as Eriksson and Zetterholm published their interpretation, Hugo Pipping produced his own version. Wishing to demonstrate the presence of number magic in the inscription, he counted all the runes on the plate and assumed that the carver used two systems based on the numbers 24 and 17 respectively. Pipping believed that the carver wished to achieve a certain number of runes (24 or 17) in each of the six verses into which he divided the text. He linked the transition from one number system to another with the inscription's mixture of two writing systems (a phenomenon which Lindquist as well as Eriksson and Zetterholm explained by the lack of space). Attributed to a desire to achieve the numbers 24 and 17 are the two **r**-runes in the sequence **sarriþu**, the placement of the punctuation marks, the omission of 'you' in the second row of the A-side, as well as the fact that no space is allocated to the B-side's three final runes **fia**, which have been moved to the A-side. The number 24 would, according to Pipping (p. 12 f.), increase the power of the inscription, while the number 17 could have been a personal number for the woman for whom the inscription was carved. Anders Bæksted (1952:266–270) provides a detailed description of Pipping's method of counting and confirms (p. 270) that "Even a brief review of Pipping's numerical investigation of the Sigtuna amulet shows that his results may be characterised as fairly arbitrary and uncertain."⁷⁰ Pipping normalises the inscription into Old West Scandinavian (1933: 11):

purs sár-riðu, þursa dróttinn
*flý þú nú fuð, fundinn es(t)*⁷¹
(h)af þér þrjár þráar ulf
(h)af þér níu nauðir ulf
þí ísir þessir ísir
auki es unír ulfr niót lyfia

Pipping identifies the word *purs* (with double-reading of the **s**-runes) in the introduction to the inscription and he adopts Lindquist's suggestion of interpreting **sarriþu** as 'wound-fever's'. Using drawings and photographs from the article by Eriksson and Zetterholm, Pipping maintains that earlier readings have omitted a **þ**-runes carved behind the **u** in the second row of side A

⁷⁰ "Allerede en kortfattet gennemgang af Pippings talmagiske undersøgelse af Sigtuna-amulettens godtgør, at hans resultater må karakteriseres som temmelig vilkårlige og usikre."

⁷¹ Pipping believes that a **t** has been omitted in *es(t)* despite, with reference to Noreen, suggesting (1933:8) *is* be interpreted as a possible form of 2 pers. pres. sg. of the verb *vesa*, *es* (cf. section 3.2.4.3).

(r. 32, Figures 15 and 16). He consequently reads this line as **fliu þu nuṫṫpntin** **is** and identifies the runic sequence **fuṫ** *fuṫ* ‘vulva’ between **nu** and **funtin**. The same word is otherwise identified by Hugo Jungner (1936:300) on the Högstena plate (Vg 216) where it is regarded as an offensive term for a rev-
enant (see section 4.3 on the Högstena plate: I do not recognise the word *fuṫ* in its inscription). Pipping (1933:6) further assumes that the demon of child-birth fever “was regarded as the lover of the woman he was attacking”.⁷² He suggests (p. 7) that the amulet “was attached to a band which hung from a gir-
dle. The amulet was thus placed very close to the entrance doorway for the feared disease.”⁷³ He translates the phrase *Flý þú nú fuṫ, fundinn es(t)* into Latin, *nunc fuge vulvam*, paraphrasing it as ‘entry forbidden’,⁷⁴ although a translation based on his normalisation would in fact be ‘You flee from the vulva now (leave the vulva now), (you) are found’, which gives a radically different meaning.

Pipping regards the three **i**-runes in the second row and the preceding **r**-rune as a cipher system employing coordinate runes: **riii** – the first rune in the third futhark family (*ætt*) – **þ**. He interprets this and the following rune **i** as dem. pron. *sá* ‘this’ in n. dat. sg., *þí*. The third row now reads: **þi_ísir þisi** **ísir auki is unír ulfr**. He explains the sequence **ísir** as the plural of runic *íss* m. – *ísir*. The sequence **auki** is interpreted as the verb *auka* ‘increase, attach’ in 3 pers. pl. pres. subj. Referring to Fritzner’s dictionary, he interprets the verb *una* as ‘become, remain, stay where you are’; *unír* is, according to him, in 2 pers. sg. pres. subj. He thus proposes (1933:11) the following interpreta-
tion of the inscription:

Wound-fever’s demon, lord among demons, *nunc fuge vulvam*, you are found.

Content yourself with threefold torment, monster!

Content yourself with ninefold need, monster!

To that attach the *íss*-runes, these *íss*-runes, that you may stay where you are. May you be affected by (my) curses, monster!⁷⁵

Even in the third row, Pipping’s translation occasions certain problems. I have difficulty accepting that the carver would have encoded a word as un-
important as **þi**. It is moreover impossible to interpret **ísir** as *íss*-runes, since the masculine noun *íss* is an *a*-stem, with expected plural *ísar*. Pipping, how-
ever, considers (1933:9) that “it is by no means a consequence that the rune name *íss* is similarly declined”.⁷⁶ He points out that the rune *íss* follows di-

⁷² “tänktes som älskare till den kvinna han angrep”

⁷³ “varit fäst vid ett snöre, som hängde ner från en livgördel. Amuletten hade sålunda sin plats mycket nära ingångsporten för den fruktade sjukdomen.”

⁷⁴ “tillträdet [*sic!*] förbjudet”

⁷⁵ “Sårfeberns demon, furste bland demoner, *nunc fuge vulvam*, du är ertappad. / Håll till godo med trefaldig trånad, odjur! / Håll till godo med niofaldig nöd, odjur! / Därtill fuge *íss*-runorna, dessa *íss*-runor, att du må stanna, där du är. Må du drabbas av (mina) besvärjelser, odjur!”

⁷⁶ “därav följer ingalunda, att runnamnet *íss* böjts lika”

rectly after the rune *nauð* f. (*nauðir* in the plural) and that the masculine rune names *óss* and *løgr* were *ósir* and *legir* in nominative plural. This is hardly due to these words being rune names, but rather because contamination occurred between the declension paradigms for masculine *a*- and *i*-stem nouns. While we cannot categorically deny the possibility of rune names being declined as *i*-stems, the fact remains that we lack specific attestations of these forms. Other OWS rune names are moreover declined in the plural in the same way as the corresponding appellative, which does not support Pipping's assumption. The overall interpretation of the *íss*-runes is however more plausible than earlier proposals and it is presumably for this reason that it was repeated by Krause (1993[1970]:55).

The word *fuð* in row 2 of side A has a very dubious reading. Its identification is dependent on the double-reading of both the **f** and the **u**-runes. Furthermore, the **p**-rune which Pipping reads behind the **u**-rune does not resemble the other **p**-runes in the inscription. Its bow is too long and narrow and terminates far too low on the mainstave; it most resembles an unsuccessful branch of the **u**-rune which was later corrected by the careful carver.

3.2.2.5 Magnus Olsen's interpretation from 1940

Magnus Olsen's reading is based on the drawing in Eriksson and Zetterholm, but his interpretation of the text diverges on some points from the earlier proposals. Olsen seems to normalise the words of the inscription into Old West Scandinavian although he provides neither a complete normalisation nor interpretation.

Olsen (1940:3) interprets the introductory sequence **þur** as the theonym *Thor*. He reads (pp. 6–11) the sequences **sar** and **ri** as imperative forms of the Olcel. verbs *særa* 'wound' and *hrjá* 'drive, hunt, persecute, plague, mistreat'. He thus reads line 1 as **þur sar ri þu þursa trutin**. He does not however provide any normalisation nor translation of the line, and it is unclear to me whether the phrase is directed at Thor (**þur**) or 'the lord of trolls' (**þursa trutin**). Olsen writes (p. 11) that "There is life and clarity in the scarce imperatives, and contributing greatly to this is the abrupt transition from one **þu** to the other. [In footnote 1:] Cf. the alternation of the subject in the Canterbury formula."⁷⁷ He thus means that **þu** in this phrase does not have the same referent as in the following phrase **fliu þu nufuntin is** (transl. from p. 7) 'You flee now! You are found.'⁷⁸ In this case it is Thor who is entreated to 'wound' and 'hunt' in the first phrase, since according to Olsen (p. 11) the malevolent being addressed in the second phrase is later in the inscription called 'wolf'.

⁷⁷ "Det er liv og anskuelighet i de knappe imperativer, og noget som sterkt bidrar hertil, er den brå overgang fra ene **þu** til det annet. [In footnote 1:] Jfr vekslingen av subjekt i Canterbury-formelen."

⁷⁸ "Flykt du nu! Funnen er du."

Olsen (1940:13 f.) interprets rows 1 and 2 of side B in the same way as Lindquist: *Haf þér þrjár þraar, ulfr! Haf þér níu nauðir, ulfr!* ‘Have yourself three torments, wolf! Have yourself nine needs, wolf!’⁷⁹

In row 3, Olsen identifies a code **is is is is ir þ is is ir auk is**, which he reads as the beginning of a futhark formula – **fupō**. A full explanation is required of why he does this. Following the three **i**-runes in row 2 is the runic sequence **is**, which he interprets as the rune name – *íss* ‘ice’; this is followed by **ir**, which he similarly explains as the name of the rune **ᚱ** (OES *īr*, OWS *ýr* ‘yew tree’). Following this are the rune **þ**, two *íss*, and again *ýr*. Olsen interprets **auk** as ‘and’, after which is yet another *íss*. Olsen therefore suggests the encrypted row looks as follows (it should be noted that he uses a short-twig form of the rune **ᚱ**): **||||, þ||, ‘and’ l**. He believes that this is a code employing coordinate runes: the fourth rune (four *íss*-runes – **||||**) in the first *ætt* (a *ýr*-rune – **l**) is the **l**-rune, followed by **þ**, after which is the second rune (two *íss*-runes) in the first *ætt* (a *ýr*-rune) – namely the **b**-rune. In the final position is the first rune in one of the three *ættir* – the **t**, **h** or **f**-rune. As **lþbt** is not meaningful, Olsen re-orders the *ættir*. The third *ætt* (**fupork**) is reassigned to first position and the first *ætt* (**tbmlr**) to last. In this way he arrives at the runic sequence **opuf**, which he interprets as the reversed futhark formula. This far-fetched and circumstantial reading hardly merits further consideration.

In all else, Olsen follows Lindquist’s interpretation. He nevertheless develops his own numerical system for the ice-rune futhark, based on the numbers 31 and 51, which in his opinion form the basis of the numerical magic of the Sigtuna plate. According to Olsen, the carver wishes to obtain the numbers 17, 51 and 31 in the inscription. Here I will again refer to Bæksted’s account (1952:224 f.) of Olsen’s calculations and results. Bæksted (p. 227) confirms that “his reading of the section with secret runes and the following ‘ice-rune fupark’ [is] such an uncertain enterprise that nothing can be built on it. [- - -] In reality, all of this, in the shape Magnus Olsen has given it, falls quite outside of the possibilities of critical evaluation.”⁸⁰ To summarise the problems with Olsen’s interpretation: the exhortation in the first line ‘Thor, wound, hunt!’ is hardly convincing; the proposed interpretation of the third row of side B is also very dubious.

3.2.2.6 Arthur Nordén’s interpretation from 1943

Norden (1943:171 f.) partly adopts Lindquist’s interpretation and partly that of Pipping but he regards (p. 169) the inscription as an incantation against “a dead person, whom one has reason to suspect wants to return as a [night]mare or as

⁷⁹ “‘Ha’ dig tre ‘trå’er’, ulv! ‘ha’ dig ni nød’er’, ulv!”: I retain the author’s idiosyncratic use of quotation marks here but not in the English translation.

⁸⁰ “hans læsning af lønrune-afsnittet og den derefter opstillede ”isrune-fupark” [er] et så usikkert foretagende, at der ikke tør bygges på det. [- - -] Det hele falder, i den form Magnus Olsen har givet det, i virkeligheden ganske uden for en kritisk vurderings muligheder.”

a ‘night wolf’”.⁸¹ He therefore does not interpret the word **sarriþu** as ‘wound-fever’s’ but as a term for a creature of the night like others with the second element *riða*: *kveldriða*, *myrkriða*, *trollriða*. He understands the word *ulfr* as a designation for a revenant, ‘night wolf’. He further remarks that it is “overwhelmingly probable”⁸² that the plate derives from a grave, which he believes supports his understanding of the inscription.

Nordén’s reading further diverges from Lindquist’s as regards the third row of side B, where he reads a staveless **k**-rune instead of a staveless **s**. He normalises (1943:172) the inscription into Old Swedish:⁸³

[P]urs sarriþu, þursa drotin! Fly þu nu! Fundin es þu.
Haf þer þreiar þrar, ulf! Haf þer niu nöper, ulfr! |||
Ikir þik ikir auk ik. Uner, ulfr! Niut lyfia!

Wound-fever’s *tuss*! king of the *tussar*! You flee now! You are found.
Have for yourself three torments, wolf, have for yourself nine needs, wolf!
|||

Ikir þik ikir auk ik. Content yourself, wolf! Enjoy the sorcery!⁸⁴

Nordén hereby leaves the third line partly uninterpreted, as he (1943:167) regards this part of the spell as a magical repetition of runes. This is due to his conclusion, after comparison with Sigtuna plates 1 and 2, that the spells are similar. The text of Sigtuna plate 2 begins with the uninterpreted runic sequence **ikakuk**, which Nordén also regards as a magical combination of runes. Elisabeth Svärdström (1969a:37 f., in footnotes) later came to suspect that this could be a Latin formulation and the whole inscription composed in Latin: I agree with Svärdström that the introduction may be Latin (see section 4.8.1).

Nordén’s proposal for the third row is thus problematic: I distinguish no staveless **k**-runes in the row, nor any compelling reasons to identify a magical repetition of runes. The basic premise should instead be that the inscription is linguistically meaningful.

3.2.2.7 Erik Moltke’s understanding of the inscription from 1934

Erik Moltke (1934:436) provides the following translation of the inscription:

Sårfeberens dæmon, dæmonernes drot, fly du nu, du er opdaget!
hav (for dig) trefoldig kval, udyr, hav nifoldig nød,⁸⁵ udyr; I I I 3 isruner,
disse isruner volde, at du slår dig til ro, udyr. Brug amuletten!

⁸¹ “en död, som man hade skäl att misstro ville gå igen som mara eller som ‘nattulv’”

⁸² “överbälgande sannolikt”

⁸³ I have changed the opening letter of Nordén’s normalisation into a capital (cf. also his normalisation of the Ulvsunda plate). I also correct the author’s ‘wolf’ in the second line of the translation.

⁸⁴ “Sårridans tuss! tussarnas konung! Fly du nu! Funnen är du. / Hav dig tre trånader, ulv, hav dig nio nöder, ul[v]! ||| / **Ikir þik ikir auk ik.** Håll tillgodo! ulv! Njut galdern!”

⁸⁵ I have here changed the author’s non-Danish spelling *nöd*.

‘Wound-fever’s demon, lord of the demons, you flee now, you are discovered!
have (for yourself) threefold torment, monster, have ninefold need, monster; I I I 3
ice-runes, these ice-runes cause you to quieten down, monster. Use the amulet!’

Moltke’s translation is based on the interpretation by Pipping. Moltke (p. 436) also agrees with Pipping that the final phrase ‘Use the amulet’ is directed at the demon. Moltke nevertheless amends the third row of the B-side slightly, choosing to translate the verb *auka* as ‘cause’ instead of ‘attach’. He does not explain where this meaning of the verb is attested.

3.2.2.8 Wolfgang Krause’s understanding of the inscription from 1970

Wolfgang Krause (1993[1970]:55 f.) provides the following translation of the inscription:

Dämon des Wundfiebers, Herr der Dämonen, flieh du nun! Du bist gefunden!
Bekomm dreifaches Leiden, du Wolf! Bekomm dreifache Not, du Wolf! *iii* die
Eis(runen), diese Eis(runen) mögen bewirken, daß du dich zufrieden gibst, du Wolf!
Genieß des Zaubers!

‘Demon of the wound-fever, lord of Demons, you flee now! You are found! Get
threefold suffering, you wolf! Get threefold need, you wolf! *iii* the ice(-runes), these
ice(-runes) may cause you to become satisfied, you wolf! Enjoy the sorcery!’

Underlying Krause’s interpretation is again that of Pipping, although unfortunately Krause does not further motivate his understanding of the inscription, nor explain what might be translated as ‘may cause’. He probably means the runic sequence **auki**, although a meaning of ‘cause, accomplish’ is not attested for the OWS verb *auka*; it seems that Krause was inspired by Moltke’s translation of *auki*. Krause does not however accept Pipping’s suggestion of *fuð* in line 2 on the A-side; instead he follows the reading and interpretation of Lindquist as well as Eriksson and Zetterholm here, as well as for the concluding phrase **niut lufia**. One may also wonder at Krause’s translation of the inscription’s **niu nopir** as ‘threefold need’. This error was repeated in Klaus Düwel’s *Runenkunde* (2008:135).

3.2.2.9 Understanding of the inscription in McKinnell & al., 2004

Krause’s translation is partly repeated in McKinnell & al. (2004:126 f.) which in its turn suggests the following translation, itself a combination of different interpretations:

A: Thor (or ‘Demon’) of gangrene, Lord of demons, flee! You have been found!

B: Receive three torments, wolf! Receive nine-fold harm (or ‘nine **n**-runes’), wolf!
Three ice(-runes), these ice(-runes) may cause that you are satisfied, wolf! (Or: ‘This
drives on, it drives on further, the wolf grants [or experiences?] it’.) Benefit from the
charm!

It is not difficult to appreciate that McKinnell & al. partly use the interpretation of Eriksson and Zetterholm (the name *Thor* in the first line as well as an alter-

native interpretation of the final line) and partly rely on Krause, although they alter the incorrect ‘threefold need’ to ‘nine-fold harm’. It is somewhat surprising that both McKinnell & al. (2004:127) as well as Düwel (2008:135) attribute the interpretation of the three i-runes as *íss*-runes to Krause, when it is actually due to Lindquist. The authors believe that the name *Thor* here refers not to a god but to a demon and lord of other disease-causing demons.

3.2.2.10 MacLeod and Mees’ understanding of the inscription from 2006

We again recognise the translation by Krause behind MacLeod & Mees’ (2006: 118) rendering of the inscription:

Ogre of wound-fever, lord of the ogres! Flee now! (You) are found. Have for yourself three pangs, wolf! Have for yourself nine needs, wolf! *iii* ice (runes). These ice (runes) may grant that you be satisfied (?), wolf. Make good use of the healing-charms!

One nonetheless observes that the authors translate **auki** not as Krause’s ‘may cause’ but as ‘grant’, which is unfounded and changes the substance of the inscription even more.

3.2.3 Conclusions and questions

As is clear from the review above, the beginning and end of the Sigtuna inscription are difficult to interpret. It is here that runologists are most inclined to disagree on interpretation. The final part of the curse (**niut lufia**) has also been understood in different ways, and for this reason it is interesting to consider these two words and their meanings more closely. Rows 1 and 2 on side B are almost unproblematic, although the meaning of the three torments and nine needs is debatable, as is the significance of the three i-runes at the end of row 2. One may also wonder why the word *ulfr* appears once with a nominative ending and once without. One might also discuss whether anything in the inscription might support the interpretation of **afþir** as ‘have yourself’ rather than ‘from you’. These are questions which I shall attempt to answer below.

3.2.4 New transliteration and interpretation

I examined the plate with a binocular microscope on four occasions (December 2008, September 2009, December 2010 and May 2011) and present my transliteration below. A drawing based on my examinations can be found in Figure 14 above. The catalogue contains my reading protocol (no 24), comments and photographs.

The Sigtuna carver has employed two different types of runes: long-branch runes and staveless runes. The occurrence of two different types of runes might be attributed to the lack of space, e.g. at the end of the second row on side A,

where a staveless rune **s** (r. 36) suddenly occurs.⁸⁶ This **s**-rune is so small that it is not easy to discern but its reading is certain. Staveless runes are also used in rows 2 and 3 on side B. These can also be explained as due to lack of space, since the inscription ends here and there was not enough room for the final three runes (104–106); the carver instead places these on side A between the words **pursa** and **trutin**.

My reading diverges in two places from the previous: I mark runes 71–73 with dashes, as I believe that a correction is evident here; I further read r. 75 as a staveless **f** rather than the staveless **s** identified by earlier scholars. There are then five staveless runes on the Sigtuna amulet: **f**, **u**, **þ**, **r** and **s**.⁸⁷

A: 1 **pur** × **sarriþu** × **pursa**

1 5 10 15

2 **trutin** **fliuþunufuntin** **is**

20 25 30 35

B: 1 **afþirþriarþrarulf** ×

40 45 50

2 **afþirniunopirulfr---**

55 60 65 70

3 **ifirþisisiraukisunirulfrniutlu**

75 80 85 90 95 100

A: **fia** carved between **pursa** and **trutin**

105

3.2.4.1 Runes 1–10 (row A 1)

Many different suggestions have been adduced for the interpretation of the opening runic sequence **pur**. Eriksson and Zetterholm choose, as discussed above, to read the theonym *Thor* but also suggest double-reading the following **s**-rune, despite the presence of a punctuation mark, to obtain the word **purs** ‘troll’. Olsen also chooses to identify the name *Thor*. Lindquist rejects this possibility and proposes *Turr*, the name of a demon, while Pipping accepts the double-reading which results in **purs** ‘troll’. McKinnell & al. (2004:126) sug-

⁸⁶ As the inscription contains no short-twig runes, I, like Lena Peterson (1994:241), consider the **s**-rune on the Sigtuna plate as a staveless rune, although its identification as short-twig **s** is not impossible. I nonetheless agree with Marco Bianchi (2010:151) who questions whether the division into short-twig, long-branch and staveless runes is even relevant in this case: “The form [ʰ] is so common in late Viking-Age inscriptions of all three types (cf. Fridell 2000:94) that classification of a single attestation is often neither practicable nor even meaningful.” (“Formen [ʰ] är så pass vanlig i senvikingatida inskrifter av alla tre typerna [jfr Fridell 2000:94] att en klassificering av ett enskilt belägg ofta är varken genomförbar eller ens meningsfull.”)

⁸⁷ Staveless runes occur on two further portable objects from Sigtuna: the bone nail U Fv1990:33 (Sl 14) with an inscription in staveless runes **sipuhun** (Peterson’s reading 1994:241) and the horn handle U Fv1992:161C (SL 28), with one of its three carved sides in staveless runes: **burkar a naskal þina kupumutr riti** (Peterson’s reading 1994:242 with a new reading of **naskal** from Bianchi 2010:145; cf. also Källström 2010a:121, 2014a:117, fn. 13).

gest reading the name of a demon, *Thor*. In their understanding of the inscription, this is Thor who as a pagan god becomes a demon from a Christian perspective.

The theonym *Thor* occurs in four Viking-Age runestones in the phrase *Þórr vígi* ‘May Thor hallow’ (Vg 150, DR 110, DR 209, DR 220). The same expression is found in the Canterbury formula (E DR419). The name is attested on the Kvinneby plate (Öl SAS1989;43A) in the expression *Þórr gæti* ‘May Thor protect’. The name is also found on a mediaeval rune-stick from Bergen: on the stick N B380 (c. 1185) it occurs in the expression *Þórr þik þiggi* ‘May Thor receive you’. The name is on the A-side of rune-stick N B668 (c. 1300), while the inscription **melfō** on the B-side is uninterpreted. In all of these, apart from the last partly uninterpreted example, Thor is called upon to do something. On the Rök stone (Ög 136), only the invocation occurs, if an exhortative verb is not concealed in the continuation. It nonetheless seems doubtful that the theonym *Thor* would be encountered without an invocation on Sigtuna plate 1. Olsen (1940:11) has of course attempted to create an invocation by dividing the sequence into the words **þur sar ri þu** ‘Thor, you wound, hunt!’ He himself points out the futility of attempting to find a conjunction in the phrase; he therefore seeks an imperative and finds one both in **sar** from the verb *særa* ‘wound’ and in **ri** from the verb *hrjá* ‘hunt’. As already observed, his interpretation is influenced by the Canterbury formula and moreover does not connect with the following phrase, which invokes the ‘lord of trolls’.

The next possibility is to interpret **þur** as a kind of demonic name. This was Lindquist’s idea, as already mentioned, after comparison of the plate with the Canterbury formula. Both inscriptions name the ‘lord of trolls’ who is driven away with almost identical words. The opening **kuril sarþuara** in the Canterbury formula has been interpreted as the name of a demon, *Gyrils sārþvara*: **kuril** is a personification based on the OWS word *gor* n. which means ‘semi-digested food in an animal’s intestines’⁸⁸ (*DRI* 1:658, *Gyril*)⁸⁹ and **sarþuara** is gen. sg. of ‘wound-stick’, which can designate the ‘core’ of a boil (Holtmark 1951:216). Also found in the Canterbury formula is the word **iuril**, which has been assumed to be a miscopying of **kuril** (*DRI* 1:658) or an English graphic variant of *Gyril* (Genzmer 1950:150–153). Since the discovery of the fever-bone from Sigtuna (see above section 3.2.2) with an inscription which contains both **ioril** and the **riþu** of the Sigtuna plate, we can be sure that it is neither a miscopying nor a graphic variant but a new name for the same or a similar creature (Källström 2012a:37–43). It is therefore tempting to also identify a suitable name in the opening of the Sigtuna plate. Lindquist suggests interpreting **þur** as a demonic name *Turr* closely related to the word **þurs**. He states (1936:39) that “an original **þuriza-*, the proto-Norse base form of **þurr*, is possibly preserved in the Norwegian plant name

⁸⁸ ‘halvfordøjet føde i dyrs tarme’

⁸⁹ The word *gorr* is also encountered in Early Modern Swedish and in Swedish dialects, where its meanings include ‘dirt, sludge’ or ‘pus occurring in a boil or wound’ (*SAOB* G, col. 765).

turrhelma, wolfsbane.”⁹⁰ This etymology is nonetheless uncertain, cf. e.g. the etymology of *turs* in *SAOB* (T, col. 3239).

A new proposal for interpreting the opening of the inscription has been made by Lennart Moberg (1962). He assumes (p. 55) that **pur** designates a disease, as is also the case with the Canterbury formula’s *Gyril* ‘pus, pus-demon’ and is able to identify a possible disease in an extinct Scandinavian word used to describe terrain (Moberg’s normalisations are used here and in the following) **tora* ‘something swollen’, ‘height’, which is found in place names in south-western Uppland such as *Toran* and *Långtora*. Moberg concedes that the word as an appellative is “unknown not only in Sweden but in all of Scandinavia”,⁹¹ but he supports his theory of its existence with the Icelandic derivations *þóri* and *þórir* “which are designations for fatty, meaty hunks on the upper body of cattle and fish”⁹² and with the word *þeor* ‘growth’ in Old English. The word *tora* thus designates “growth-like formations of terrain, i.e. hills”,⁹³ allowing the interpretation of the word *þor* as ‘boil, growth’. Taking Moberg’s proposed *þor* ‘boil’ as reasonable, one could then regard the word as the name of a demon, as is assumed to be the case with the Canterbury formula.

The suggestion in McKinnell & al. (2004) that the theonym *Thor* refers to a demon is however problematic. It is particularly unclear how the god Thor, transformed into a demon, would become *þursa dróttinn*, lord of his worst enemies, the trolls. The kenning for ‘giant’, *berg-Þórr*, found in *Lexicon Poeticum*, was employed by the skald Skraut-Oddr in the eleventh century, and is offered by McKinnell & al. (2004:126) as support for their understanding of the theonym *Thor* as the name of a troll prince. Heimir Pálsson (pers. comm.), however, believes that the kenning *berg-Þórr* simply refers to an extraordinarily strong giant who is just as strong as Thor.

The most likely interpretation of the reading **pur** is thus *þōr* ‘boil’, which refers to an infection in a wound. This interpretation, moreover, finds parallels in both the Canterbury formula and the inscription on the Sigtuna fever-bone.

An alternative interpretation reading **purs** in the beginning of the inscription is favoured by Pipping, Nordén and Høst. The reason for its lack of acceptance by other scholars is due to the problematic double-reading of the **s**-rune over a punctuation mark. This is nevertheless the alternative which I prefer. Moberg (1962:53) writes that “A *þurs* ‘troll’ would fit perfectly, were it not the case that the carver had placed a clear sign of word division between *Pur* and *sarriþu*.”⁹⁴

One may nonetheless note that the placement of this particular punctuation mark above the **s**-rune means that it may not necessarily separate words: **pur**

⁹⁰ “ett ursprungligt **puriza-*, den urnordiska grundformen till **þurr*, är möjligen bevarat i det norska växtnamnet *turrhelma*, stormhatten, trolltörel”

⁹¹ “okänt inte bara i Sverige utan i hela Norden”

⁹² “som är beteckningar för feta, kötrika partier på framkroppen hos nötkreatur och fiskar”

⁹³ “svulstliknande terrängformationer, dvs. höjder”

⁹⁴ “Ett *þurs* ‘troll’ skulle passa förträffligt, om det inte vore så, att ristaren placerat ett tydligt ordskillnadstecken mellan *Pur* och *sarriþu*.”

and **sarriþu** are placed together with no greater distance between the **r** and **s** than normally occurs between runes on this plate. This is even more apparent if we compare this first punctuation mark with the other – the one occurring after the word **sarriþu**, where the spacing is much greater. With the first punctuation mark, the carver presumably wished only to somehow mark the words **purs** and **sarriþu** without demarcating them. One may also observe that the carver chose a reversed form of the **s**-rune (𐌺), presumably deliberately in order to maintain the usual distance between the runes rather than increasing it, as would have occurred with the form 𐌺. (The other **s**-runes in this inscription have the forms 𐌺 or 𐌺.) We also have at least two certain runic Swedish attestations of runes being double-read over punctuation marks. One of these is on U 539: **uk** × **us mupir** *ok Guðs mōðir*. The other occurs on Öl Köping30: **santa** × **mari** × **auk** × *Sankta Maria ok*. There are a number of further examples, although all are problematic.⁹⁵

The word *purs* means ‘giant, troll’ and survives in Swedish dialects as *tusse* ‘giant, wolf’ (Rietz, *turs*). In Old Icelandic the word *purs/puss* means ‘troll, half-troll; the rune which designates **p**’ (Fritzner). The word *purs* also occurs in further runic inscriptions on similar objects. Solberga plates 1 and 2 contain an exhortation to drive off **þrymianti purs** ‘the howling troll’ and **purs þrihufþa** ‘the three-headed troll’ (see section 3.4.3.3). A rune-stick from Bergen (N B257) reads *Ríst ek bótrúnar, ríst ek bjargrúnar, einfalt við alfum, tvífalt við trollum, þrífalt við purs[um]* ‘I carve cure-runes, I carve helping-runes, once against the elves, twice against the ogres, three times against the trolls’ (see the entire formula on p. 312). The word *purs* also occurs in *Skírnismál* (verses 31, 36, see p. 177). Finally, the word **purs** or **pursar** probably occurs on a bronze amulet (DR DKSJy76) from Gammel Hviding, South Jutland (Sønderjylland), dated to the late Viking Age on archaeological and runographic grounds. I will return to the link between the word *purs* and different names for diseases in section 3.2.5.1.

The runic sequence **sarriþu** has been interpreted in various ways by scholars, although the proposal by Ivar Lindquist (1932, 1936) to read a compound word **sarriþu** ‘wound-fever’s’ is the most appealing, explaining as it does the unusual duplication of **r**. Long consonants were not usually doubled during the Viking Age, but since the word is a compound, the doubling occurs on the boundary of two words, **sar** and **riþu**. The word *sār* presumably also occurs in the Canterbury formula in the sequence **kurilsarþuara** ‘wound-tap’. The word *riða*

⁹⁵ Less certain attestations thus occur on DR 1 **þurlf** × **risþi** *Þōrulf̃r rēsti*; on DR 53 **þurkisl** : **sun** *Þorgīsls sun*; and on U 623: **sikiþr** · **auk sikfast** · **raistu** *Sigviðr ok Sigfastr raistu*. There is uncertainty in all of these cases whether this is a matter of double-reading of the following rune despite the punctuation mark, or loss of ending marker. The lost part of the inscription on Sö 30 apparently read [**kīaru** · **at**] [*gæ̃rva at*], but this evidence is uncertain as the reading cannot be confirmed. A further uncertain attestation is found on U 854, which reads **ak** · **unuiþr** *ok Gunnviðr*; it is nonetheless also possible to interpret this as *ok Unnviðr* (Stille 1999:139), despite this resulting in a *hapax legomenon*. Further uncertain attestations include the name *Þōrir/Þōri* (?) on Ög 123 †, Vg 112, Vg 114 and Vg 160 (see Larsson 2002:115 f.).

is translated by Fritzner as ‘cold fever’, a designation incorporating both shivering and fever. The same word also occurs on the fever-bone from Sigtuna in the sequences **bathan** × **riþu** ‘he bound the fever’ and **fly** : **braot riþa** ‘Flee away, fever!’ In this expression we also have the same verb as **fliu** ‘flee’ of the Sigtuna plate. The phrase thus parallels our banishment phrase ‘you flee now, found are’, and if my suggestion is correct, the word **purs**, the lord of trolls, is followed by the post-modifier **sārriðu** ‘of wound-fever’. The opening invocation thus reads: ‘Wound-fever’s troll, lord of trolls’.

I thus endorse Pipping’s and Nordén’s interpretation of the first word **purs** as well as Lindquist’s interpretation of **sarriþu**, and my contribution here, as I see it, is that my analysis is based on internal observations relevant to the inscription itself (the placement of the first punctuation mark in comparison with the following one as well as the form of the **s**-rune in relation to the other **s**-runes of the inscription). I do not however wish to dismiss Moberg’s interpretation of **pur** as a personification of the word ‘boil’.

3.2.4.2 Runes 11–21 (rows A 1–2)

The runic sequence **pursatrutin** has been convincingly interpreted as *pursa dröttinn* ‘lord of trolls’ and from all evidence refers back to the first word, **purs**. This expression is found in the Old Icelandic poem *Prymskviða*, where the giant Trym is called ‘lord of trolls’; Thor’s hammer, stolen by Trym, is used to kill Trym and all his giants in the last verses of the lay. The term also occurs in the Canterbury formula, which mentions both Thor and the ‘lord of trolls’.

3.2.4.3 Runes 22–36 (row A 2)

The runic sequence **fliupunufuntinis** has been unanimously read and interpreted as ‘You flee now. [You] are found’. I would however like to observe that the sequence **is** (rr. 35–36) lacks the **t**-rune required to form 2 pers. sg. ind. *est* from the verb *vesa*. The pers. pron. *þū* is also missing but supplemented by most scholars under the influence of the Canterbury formula. This is understandable, since it is difficult to imagine anyone but the troll as the implied subject. The simplest solution is then, in line with earlier interpretations, to presume a carving error. One can then supplement both the **t**-rune and even the pers. pron. *þū* (or *tu*). The problem with this proposition – as well as the suggestion of carving error always being a last resort – is that the carver of this inscription is very careful to correct any mistakes (see the catalogue, no 24) and would almost certainly have corrected this supposed error as well. The carver moreover placed the final three runes, for which there was not enough space on side B, between rows 1 and 2 on side A. The intention here must have been to continue the phrase ‘are found’ on side B. I thus believe that a better solution to the problem should be sought.

Pipping (1933:8) draws attention to Noreen's (1904, § 562) observation on 2 pers. sg. of the OSw. verb *vara*, *væra* “*æst*, often also = 3. sg.”⁹⁶ The 2 pers. sg. form may thus coincide with 3 pers. sg. *ær* (*es*). Söderwall (p. 924) reviews some examples, although none of these is particularly early. Noreen (1923, § 532.3, note 1) elsewhere writes of the OIcel. verb *vesa* that “very rare old alternative forms are 2 sg. *es* (Got. *is*), *er*”.⁹⁷ It thus appears possible to suggest that the Sigtuna plate's **is** is an archaic form *es* ‘are’ in 2 pers. sg. pres. We can thus explain the lack of the **t**-rune with the form *es*, but not the lack of subject in the phrase ‘are found’.

A solution to the problem of the missing subject has however been suggested by Staffan Fridell (pers. comm.). He believes that the phrase ‘are found’ can be understood as a relative clause lacking a relative pronoun. Wessén (1965c:248–250, 266) provides examples of a relative pronoun being omitted in subordinate clauses in Proto-Norse and Old Swedish, including U 355, where we find: **ulmfriþ uk ulmfastr** [had this stone raised in memory of ...] **sun kupriks i myriby buki** ‘Gudrik’s son, who lived in Mörby’. Wessén further confirms that this was particularly common in East Scandinavian legal language. The sentence on Sigtuna plate 1 can thus be interpreted as ‘You flee now, (you who) are found’.

Although the suggestions of both Pipping and Fridell are feasible, I wish to suggest one further solution which I consider superior by virtue of its simplicity. The phrase **funtin is** could be intended to continue in line 1 on side A with **purs sarriþu pursa trutin**. We thus obtain a *perpetuum mobile*, an unending sentence: ‘Wound-fever’s troll, lord of trolls! You flee now! Found is the wound-fever’s troll, lord of trolls. You flee now! Found is the wound-fever’s ...’ etc (cf. Figure 14; one should also bear in mind that the plate was hung vertically, rather than horizontally as depicted in the illustration). A similar way of linking the beginning and end of the inscription has been suggested for the Oklunda carving (Ög N288; see Lönnqvist & Widmark 1997:147 f. as well as Fridell & Óskarsson 2011:143 f.).

3.2.4.4 Runes 37–73 (rows B 1–2)

Row 1 reads **afþiarpriarþrarulf** and row 2 **afþirniunopirulfr---**. As is clear from all attempts at interpretation, these two rows present no great interpretational difficulty with the exception of some uncertainty over the initial **afþi**. It is also interesting to consider why *ulfr* lacks the nominative *r*-ending in one of three cases (rr. 51–53). A further question is raised by the meaning of ‘three torments’ and ‘nine afflictions’. In order to understand the meaning of **priar þrar** and **niu nopir** as well as the connection between these, we must look more closely at the contexts in which these particular nouns were used in runic inscriptions and mediaeval texts respectively.

⁹⁶ “*æst*, oft auch = 3. sg.”

⁹⁷ “[s]ehr seltene alte nebenformen sind 2 sg. *es* (got. *is*), *er*”

Eriksson and Zetterholm interpreted the sequence **afþir** as *hefðir*, the verb *hafa* in 2 pers. sg. pret. subj. These authors also suggested interpreting the sequence as the two words **af þir** ‘from you’. The phrase is then transformed from a curse to a kind of accusation: ‘From you (come) three torments, wolf, from you (come) nine afflictions, wolf’. After the banishment phrase in the previous line (‘You flee now, found are’) one is more inclined to expect a new command, however: Lindquist’s suggestion to here identify the verb *hafa* in 2 pers. sg. imperative ‘have yourself’ therefore seems more probable. Moreover, one also encounters the verb *flyja* in the imperative form *fly* in the preceding line and, as Lindquist (1936:33) himself observes, “the preteritum subjunctive does not fit – as an irrealis mood – as well as the imperative, the most energetic form.”⁹⁸

We have examples in Old Icelandic of this verb being used in pres. subj. in spells with a similar meaning: *Far þú nú, þars þik hafi allir gramir* ‘You go now to where all the trolls may take you’ and *Hafi þik allan troll* ‘May trolls take all of you’ (quoted from Fritzner, *hafa* 5).⁹⁹ The first example also has the construction *far þú nú* which is paralleled on the Sigtuna plate and in the Canterbury formula. I therefore endorse Lindquist’s suggestion but wish also to discuss the possible meaning of ‘have yourself’ in this context (see section 3.2.4.5).

Before I discuss **þriar þrar** and **niu nopir**, it is however necessary to briefly consider the matter of the word *ulfr* lacking a nominative *r*-ending in one case out of three.¹⁰⁰ Lindquist (1932:58 f.) initially explains the lack of *r*-ending in the word as an archaism, i.e. an ancient vocative case comparable with Gothic; he himself however conclusively rejects this idea almost immediately. He changes his mind again (1987:33) during his many years of work on the Kvinneby plate, in whose inscription he identifies an endingless form of the word *illvættir*, however. He therefore maintains that the endingless form of the word *ulfr* on the Sigtuna plate provides “quite good support”¹⁰¹ for the assumption that the vocative case survived into runic Swedish times.

The explanation may however lie much closer to our time: the form may instead provide an early example of change in case morphology, where the accusative form has begun to replace the nominative. Salberger (1978:103 f.) gives several examples from Upplandic runestones, all signed by or attributed to the carver Visäte, which exhibit this phenomenon (e.g. U 180, U 237, U 243 †, U 333, U 337, U 350, U 503, U 511, U 614 and U 669 †). Lindquist himself (1932:59) provides some examples (in his first interpretation, where he rejects the hypothetical vocative), for instance the name **rhulf Hrölf** on Sm 52 and

⁹⁸ “preteritum konjunktiv passar – såsom irrealis – inte lika väl som imperativ, den mest energiska formen.”

⁹⁹ ‘Far du nu dit alla trollen tar dig’ and ‘Må troll ta hela dig’.

¹⁰⁰ According to Lindquist’s first reading (1932:18), the *r*-ending is missing in *ulfr* twice, but it seems that by his second reading (1936:32) only one case remains, since he there accepts Eriksson and Zetterholm’s reading of the runes.

¹⁰¹ “ganska gott stöd”

ripulf on Ög 207 (**uiþulf** *Viðulf* according to a newer reading and interpretation by Strid 1984). Other examples worth mentioning include **þurulf** *Þōrulf* on U 201 and **ulf** *Ulf* on Ög 232: both of these are quite early and belong to the beginning of the eleventh century.

The word *ulf* occurs a further two times in the inscription, however, in both cases with the nominative *r*-ending. The nominative form is in subject position in both instances in a sentence with subject and predicate. The endingless form (a form identical to accusative instead of expected nominative) is found where the noun is isolated in vocative function. Staffan Fridell (pers. comm.) suggests that this may not be a coincidence, explaining that the need for a marked nominative may have been felt more strongly in the position of subject rather than vocative. Instead of the archaism suggested by Lindquist (a relic of the vocative case) we have an innovation (replacement of nominative by accusative), which may have been encouraged by the isolated position in vocative function. Lindquist's observation is in this case partly correct, although his linguistic explanation is not.

We now return to the passages **priar þrar** and **niu nopir** (see section 3.2.6 on the form **nopir**). The two OWS words *þrá* and *nauðr* have a semantic link, as evidenced by an Icelandic runic verse which states *nauð er þýjar þrá* 'need is bondswomen's affliction'¹⁰² (Olsen 1940:15). There is however an interesting difference in perspective, as pointed out by Olsen (1940:15): the word *nauðr* f. refers to circumstances which force and oppress, while *þrá* f. refers to a distressing longing for liberation from pressure and oppression. On the one hand, the enchanter wants *ulf* to end up in distressing circumstances, while on the other he or she wants *ulf* to then be plagued by the desire to be freed. Fritzner interprets the word *nauðr* as 'pressure which rests heavily on a person', 'hardship which makes one's position uncomfortable', 'necessity which compels someone to do something' and 'the rune which designates the letter N'.¹⁰³ The word *þrá* is interpreted by Fritzner as 'longing, missing'.¹⁰⁴ This may be pining for something one has lost, e.g. in *Lokasenna* (39): *Handar em ek vanr, en þú Hróðrsvitnis; bql er beggja þrá* 'A hand has been stolen from me, but Rodvitner from you, the loss causes us both sorrow' (translated from Brate 1913).¹⁰⁵ The word *þrá* is not encountered in other runic inscriptions but may be found in the Proto-Scandinavian name **þrawijan** on the Tanum stone (Bo KJ61, see Grønvik 1990:284). On the Ladoga plate I suggest reading a cognate, the verb *þrā* 'long for' (see section 7.2.2.4).

The word *nauðr* (or the name of the rune) is attested a number of times. On a rune-stick from Ribe (DR EM85:493), dated to around the fourteenth century

¹⁰² 'nöd är trälinnors plåga'

¹⁰³ 'tryk som hviler tungt paa en', 'trængsel som gjør ens stilling ubehagelig', 'nødvendighed som tvinger en til noget', 'runen som betegner bogstavet N'.

¹⁰⁴ 'længsel, savn'

¹⁰⁵ 'Handen mig rövats men Rodvitner dig, oss båda vållar saknaden sorg' (Brate's translation, 1913).

and carved with a long incantation on four sides, the word occurs in the last section of the text (normalisation and translation based on DK SJy41; Moltke provides no normalisation of this part of the inscription and his translation is less precise than the one in DK):

C: [...] *Svart hetær sten, han stær i hafæ utæ þær ligær a þe ni nouþær, þær ...*

D: *skulæ huærki sötæn sofæ æþ uarmæn uakæ fjörr æn þu þæssæ bot biþær, þær ak orþ at kæþæ ronti. Amen ok þæt se.*

C: [...] A stone is called Svartr (Black), it stands out in the sea, there lie upon it nine needs, who ...

D: shall neither sleep sweetly nor wake warmly until you pray this cure which I have proclaimed in runic words. Amen and so be it.

It is clear here that the nine needs do not bode well, and that only the runic words of the carver can protect against their effects. The name of the stone, *Svartr*, indicates the same. It has also been assumed that the word *naudr* occurs on Sigtuna plate 2, but the reading of this part of the inscription is very uncertain, and I strongly doubt that it contains this word (section 4.8.1). It is possible that the **n**-runes on an amulet from Lindholmen (DR 261) stand for ‘needs’, and perhaps the **n**-runes found on a wooden stick from Lödöse (Vg 281) do too. According to a suggestion by Olsen (in Nordén 1937:159; Krause & Jankuhn 1966:49), the word *naudr* occurs on a proto-Scandinavian bronze buckle (N 450) *siklis na hli Sigli's nauða hlé* ‘The jewellery is protection against need’. More feasible interpretations of this inscription do not however identify this word.

The rune *naudr* had to be marked on the nails, while *qlrúnar* ‘ale-runes’ were to be carved on horn and hand to protect against betrayal (*Sigrdrífumál* 8). It is nevertheless interesting to note that the role of the runes here is to protect rather than to harm. On the Lindholmen amulet they nevertheless occur together with *óss*-runes (and *purs*-runes in the Lödöse inscription Vg 281), a combination which is known from other spells – e.g. *kvennagaldur* (Árnason 1862 1:449). This type of enchantment, used to force a woman to love, opens with the phrase: *Risti eg þér ása átta, nauðir níu* ‘I carved you eight *óss*[-runes], nine needs’.

The ‘nine needs’ are seen to have an even more extended use in a sixteenth-century Icelandic book of black magic (Lindqvist 1921:73), where they are used in a spell called *Fart-runes* which contains the following instructions:

Write these staves on white calfskin with your blood; take the blood onto your thigh and say: “I carve you eight ‘*áss*-runes’, nine ‘*naud*-runes’, thirteen ‘*purs*-runes’, which may plague your belly with heavy diarrhoea and flatulence; and all these [runes] may torment your belly with powerful farting.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ “Skriv dessa stavar på vitt kalvskinn med ditt blod; tag blod på låret och säg ”jag ristar dig åtta ‘*áss*-runor’, nio ‘*naud*-runor’, tretton ‘*purs*-runor’, vilka må plåga din buk med svår utsot och våderspänning; och alla dessa [runor] må pina din buk med våldsamt fjärtande.”

It is clear from these examples that ‘nine needs’ were regarded as powerful magic to punish others. Three types of need – captivity, famine and fire – are mentioned in a Frisian law text which Olsen (1940:15) discusses in his article on the Sigtuna plate. It would therefore be unsurprising for ideas about which three (or nine) types of need would plague recipients of such a curse to exist in early mediaeval Sigtuna.

A great deal can be written about the numbers *three* and *nine* in this curse, and on the purpose of these numbers. This has already been done several times by the many scholars who have tried to interpret this inscription and as Anders Bæksted (1952:173 f.) has shown in his critical analysis of research into runic numerology, many encounter difficulties. There is however no doubt that the number three and its multiple nine neither occur arbitrarily here, nor have they been chosen for their alliteration with the words *þrār* and *nauðir*; they must instead have served a particular purpose. It is difficult to establish this purpose today, but it was possibly to enhance the effect of the carved (and spoken) words.¹⁰⁷ In this context it is worth observing that the word *ulfr* occurs three times in the inscription.

These two rows are followed by three vertical mainstaves usually considered to be three i-runes. Lindquist (1936:31) rejects Eriksson and Zetterholm’s suggestion of regarding them as a kind of augmentation of the spell’s ‘three torments’ and ‘nine needs’, but his own proposal is hardly more satisfactory. With reference to Sigurd Agrell, he (p. 45) regards these signs as magical death-runes of some kind, which “according to the meaning of the word signify make cold = ‘kill’ – and were used to bring about death and destruction”.¹⁰⁸ Agrell (1927:73), however, did not believe that the meaning ‘to make cold’ was due to the name of the rune, *íss*, but to the fact that it occupied the tenth place in the *uthark*. Agrell states that the number ten in the Greek-Oriental tradition of number magic was considered to be ‘soul-generating’¹⁰⁹ and that even before Plato, the human spirit was thought to have two powers – “one of them fiery hot [...] the other damply cold”.¹¹⁰ Since sound correspondences meant the Greek word for ‘soul’ was associated with the word ‘damp, cold’, Agrell (1927:74) suggests that “the rune name with the meaning of ‘ice’ [...] therefore [can] be thought to stand as a symbol for the magic force of cold.”¹¹¹ Agrell’s explanation is complicated, and he himself concedes that the rune with the numerical value of 10 “poses a really tricky problem”.¹¹² But Agrell’s explanation

¹⁰⁷ Grambo (1979:34) writes that “the number nine may be considered as an augmentation of the number three. For this reason it is used quite often in folk medicine.” (“Nittallet må betraktes som en forsterkning av tretallet. Det brukes av den grunn ganske ofte i folkmedisinen.”)

¹⁰⁸ “efter betydelsen hos ordet, märk göra kall = ‘döda’ – nyttjats till att framkalla död och fördärv”

¹⁰⁹ ‘själaskapande’

¹¹⁰ “den ena eldigt varm [...] den andra fuktigt kall”

¹¹¹ “Runnamnet med betydelsen ‘is’ [...] därför [kan] tänkas stå såsom en symbol för köldens magiska kraft.”

¹¹² “erbjuder ett rätt kinkigt problem”

of the importance of the rune was related to the *uthark*, not the futhark; its blithe acceptance by Lindquist is therefore surprising. I also fail to see the equivalence between ‘to ice, to make cold’ and ‘to kill’; conversely, as regards fever, ‘making cold’ can be a cure in itself. I thus do not believe in the explanation of ‘death-runes’. More feasible perhaps are ‘cooling’ or ‘soothing’ runes, particularly in relation to a fever requiring cooling, although there is in fact a more likely explanation for the use of the runes.

Three vertical lines could also be used as a kind of punctuation mark, and I have found three i-like strokes occurring on a further three plates. On Solberga plate 1 these occur at the beginning and end of an encrypted row of runes (Figure 20). The second half of the inscription on the Hallbjäns plate begins with three vertical strokes (Figure 13) which Gustavson (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:190) suggests should be regarded as three *íss*-runes carved with a magical purpose: I prefer to instead regard these as components of an introductory sign. Three vertical carved strokes decorated with dots (:|||:) also open the Hovgård plate (Figure 30) and the inscription on the Forsa ring (Hs 7), apparently functioning as a kind of introductory mark. Three vertical strokes could thus be used on portable objects as a mark of the beginning of the text or for new sections therein. One can observe that two other punctuation marks in our inscription are cross-shaped. There is however a fine parallelism in rows 1 and 2 on side B which both conclude with punctuation marks, albeit of different types.

In the catalogue I discuss the possibility of regarding the three supposed i-runes as the result of a carving error. Several factors suggest this, e.g. the three runes **fia**, which were moved to side A due to a lack of space on side B. Also perhaps indicative of a correction is the line through the three i-runes, which is difficult to explain as part of a punctuation mark. It is important in this context that the carver corrected errors very carefully, leaving the inscription with alterations in several other places (see catalogue, no 24). Weakening the idea of a correction, however, is its base in the assumption that the carver particularly wanted a staveless **f**-rune ($\bar{\text{I}}$) in the immediately following sequence **ifi** rather than the usual form (f); otherwise the carver would not have needed to strike through the mainstaves but could have transformed the second mainstave into an **f** simply by carving two branches onto it. I nevertheless ultimately choose to regard the three signs as the result of a correction.

3.2.4.5 Runes 74–97 (row B 3)

Row 3 is the only one for which a convincing interpretation is still lacking. At the fourth full-day Rune Rede in Uppsala on the 13th May 2011, I suggested that this is partly due to a misreading of one rune in the row: rune 75, earlier read as a staveless **s**, should actually be read as a staveless **f**-rune (see photographs and discussion in the catalogue, no 24).

The row begins with the sequence **ifir**, with the yew-rune indicating the probable word boundary. The most obvious interpretation of **ifir** is as the runSw. verb *hafa* in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. The lack of **h**-rune is no barrier to this interpretation: according to Lindquist, the inscription also shows loss of *h* in the sequence **af** in rows 1 and 2 on side B, which has been interpreted as the imperative of the verb ‘to have’, *haf!* The same loss of *h* occurs in the verb in 3 pers. sg. pres. *hafR* **afR** on Sö 195.¹¹³

The runic sequence **þisi** which follows can be interpreted as dem. pron. *sā(r)si* in f. acc. pl., *þessi*. This pronoun probably refers back to *naudir* and *þrār*, which are feminine words. The pronoun is found in the form **þisi** *þessi* on U 517 and U 519. The following **sir** may be interpreted as refl. pron. in dat. sg. *sēr* ‘himself/herself’: it is found in this form **sir** on U 347.

Row 3 thus begins with the words **ifir þisi sir hæfir þessi sēr** ‘have him/herself these’. The sequence **ulfr** precedes **ifir**. The two preceding lines curse the *ulfr* (demon of disease or the personified name of the disease) in the following way: ‘Have yourself three torments, wolf, have yourself nine needs’. One may therefore suppose that the subject of the opening sentence in row 3 is the *ulfr* of the preceding row which is possibly linked to the third row via its final rune, a staveless **r** (staveless runes are further employed in row 3). On the other hand, the three **i**-runes discussed above stand between the words *ulfr* and *hæfir*. They present no interpretational difficulties if they are considered to be a correction; if they conversely are regarded as a mark of punctuation, it becomes more difficult to defend the use of *ulfr* as subject for the following. In this case we can suppose that *ulfr* is the implied subject for this clause.

The construction with the verb *hafa* and the reflexive dative pronoun, *sēr*, was quite possible in Old West Scandinavian and also occurred in Old East Scandinavian. We have some examples of the construction in Old Icelandic. In *Sigrdrífumál* (verse 20), Sigrdrifa tells Sigurd which runes he should know and says that *hveim er þær kná óvilltar ok óspilltar sér at heillum hafa* ‘these are for the one who without confusion or loss can have them to their advantage.’ In *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* (chap. 11), Gestumblinde (Odin) asks Hedrek riddles. One of these concerns the anchor, which is said to save people and tear up the earth *ef hann hefir sér vel traustan vin* ‘if he has himself a trusted friend’, i.e. if the anchor is given by a trusted friend. Sighvatr Þórðarson says in *Austrfararvísur* (p. 139) *Átt hafa sér, þeirs sóttu* ‘They attacked to come into possession of (to take for themselves, to have for themselves)’. We also have an example in Old East Scandinavian of the construction *hafa* with refl. pron. *sēr* in *Gutasagan*, as already noted by Lindquist (1936:33 fn. 5, quoted from Lindquist): *Land alt hafþi sir hoystu blotan miþ fulki, ellar hafþi huer þriþiungr sir, en smeri þing hafþu mindri blotan meþ fileþi matj oc mungati* ‘The whole country had the highest sacrifice with people, otherwise every rid-

¹¹³ On the conjugational variants see Noreen (1904, § 535.5); cf. also the spelling with the **i**-rune: **hifir** on Vg 59 and U 759.

ing had its sacrifice, and smaller things had smaller sacrifices with cattle, food and drink'.¹¹⁴ Lindquist (1932:55) has also shown analogical constructions in Middle High German, and moreover in spells which contain the corresponding words *hab dir* with a designation of a disease as accusative object: *Ey des hab dir die welschen kretz!* 'Hey, may you thus get the Welsh (foreign) scabies!' Lindquist (1932:55) has also found examples of the expression in Old English: *Hafa þe wunden gold!* 'Take the twisted gold!'

I thus believe that the runic sequence **afþir** in rows 1 and 2 on side B are more likely to represent 'have for yourself' than 'from you', meaning 'to have, take, grasp', and that the sequence **ulfr---ifirþisisir** renders 'the wolf has these for itself', which means 'the wolf takes/grasps these (torments and needs)'.¹¹⁵

The reflexive pronoun in the dative occurs with other verbs in runic Swedish. On U 778 it is used for example "with a greatly weakened sense"¹¹⁵ (Wessén 1965c:16) in the sentence **is ati ain sir skib es ātti æinn sēr skip** 'he alone owned a ship'. The word order is interesting in this case: *sēr* follows the subject and the predicate as a formal object, directly followed by the direct object, *skip*. On the Sigtuna plate a direct object (*þessi*) occurs first and then an indirect (*sēr*). On DR 42 the reflexive pronoun has its usual basic meaning: **sa haraltr : ias : sor : uan : tanmaurk sā Haraldr æs sēr wan Danmork** 'the Harald who won for himself Denmark'. Here the indirect object *sēr* follows the subject but precedes the predicate, which is followed by the direct object, Denmark. The syntax is thus not dissimilar to that on the Sigtuna plate.

The syntax in the sentence *Ulf̃r hæfir þessi sēr* does diverge, however, from that in the two preceding lines: *Haf þēr þrīar þrār, ulf, haf þēr nīu nauðir!* The subject in the first sentence is in first position and followed by the predicate, direct object and indirect object. The following sentence instead consists of two parallel parts of identical syntactic structure. In each part, the predicate is first – which is typical of imperative clauses – followed by the indirect object and then the direct object. There is no subject, as in virtually all imperative clauses, but the sentence is enhanced by the address to *ulf̃(r)*, which is inserted between the two parts of the sentence.

The placement of two objects in relation to each other shows a great deal of variation in Old Scandinavian languages. There are many examples of such fluctuation in Old Icelandic: *Yrsa fekk Hrólfi kraka* (ind. obj.) *dýrshorn* (dir. obj.) 'Yrsa gave Rolf Krake an animal's horn', but *Aðils konungr sendi boð* (dir. obj.) *Hrólfi kraka* (ind. obj.) 'Kung Adils sent a message to Rolf Krake'. The difference in placement of direct and indirect object in the two runic sentences thus is not particularly surprising: while different explanations are possible, rhythmic reasons seem to be primarily responsible for the placement in the first clause of the indirect object first, with the order reversed in the following clause.

¹¹⁴ "Hela landet hade det högsta blot med människor, eljest hade var treding sitt blot, och smärre ting hade mindre blot med boskap, mat och dryck."

¹¹⁵ "med starkt avbleknad betydelse"

I interpret the next runic sequence **auk** as conj. *ok* ‘and, but’. The runic sequence **isunirulfr** remains to be interpreted. The sequence **is** could be interpreted as the relative particle *es* ‘who, which’ or as the anaphoric pronoun ‘he’. The fact that this relative particle/anaphoric pronoun has the form **is** (rather than **ir**) corresponds to the general orthography of the inscription. Ulla Stroh-Wollin (1997:125) shows that a phonetic development from the *s*-form to the *r*-form for *es/er* occurs in parallel with the corresponding development in the present and preterite forms of the verb *vesa/vera*. The verb *vesa* in our inscription is indeed **is** in 3 pers. sg. in row 2 on side A. Stroh-Wollin also observes that the *s*-form of this particle/pronoun is more common than the *r*-form in Uppland.

The sequence **unir** can be interpreted as 3 pers. sg. pres. *unir*, which corresponds to the OIcel. verb *una* ‘feel satisfied, settle down (in a place); become, remain; content oneself with something’ (Fritzner).¹¹⁶ There are many examples of the verb *una* in the sense ‘enjoy, be satisfied with’ in Fritzner, e.g. from *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* (55): *heill skaltu ... ok una lífi* ‘you shall (be) happy ... and enjoy life’. There are also examples in Fritzner of the sense ‘settle down’: *Tumi Sighvatsson undi eigi í Flateyju* ‘Tumi Sighvatsson didn’t settle down in Flatey’. A similar example is provided by Olsen (1940: 40): the verb is here used about the Midgård serpent, whose attack was greatly feared: *unir Þjóðvitnis fiskr flóði í* ‘the fish of Þjóðvitnir keeps calm in the sea’ (*Grímnismál* 21). The calming of a fearsome entity by the pronouncement of an incantation can be regarded as effective. I thus consider that this meaning might apply to the inscription’s **unir**.

The nominative *r*-ending of the immediately following form **ulfr** shows that the word is the subject (see section 3.2.6 on the orthography of the word). It may either begin the following phrase, i.e. *ulfr, njut lyfia*, or be the subject of the previous sentence, i.e. *ok es unir ulfr*. The alternative chosen depends on the interpretation of the sequence **is**, which may be the relative particle ‘who, which’ or the anaphoric pronoun ‘he’. Ulla Stroh-Wollin (1994:114) points out that “many times it is impossible to determine on structural grounds whether a clause introduced by *es* or *er* is a main clause or a subordinate clause”,¹¹⁷ and that both are often equally possible from a grammatical point of view, as for example on U 661: *Gæirvi ok Gulla ræistu stæin þenna æftir Anund, faður sinn. Es vas austr dauðr með Ingvari* ‘Geirvé and Gulla raised this stone in memory of Önundr, their father who/He died in the east with Ingvarr’. There is, according to Stroh-Wollin’s analysis, only one unambiguous main clause in the runic material which is introduced by the anaphoric pronoun *es*, namely: *Es kunni val knærri stýra* (‘He could steer a cargo-ship well’) on U 654. It is however much more difficult to unequivocally identify main clauses rather than subordinate clauses, and I wish therefore to list other possible main clauses

¹¹⁶ ‘finde sig tilfreds, give sig til ro (paa et sted); blive, forblive; finde sig tilfreds med noget’

¹¹⁷ “Många gånger är det omöjligt att på strukturella grunder avgöra om en sats inledd med *es* eller *er* är en huvudsats eller en bisats.”

which Ulla Stroh-Wollin excludes from her stringent investigation: these occur on Vg 4, Vg 40, Vg 197, U 778 and U 802. She simultaneously maintains (p. 129) that the Mälars region had no unambiguous relative pronoun before *sum* began to be used in this function, and that several of the sentences beginning with *es/er* “preferably or just as easily can be interpreted as main clauses instead of relative clauses.”¹¹⁸ We therefore may have rather more than only one example of *es/er* beginning a main clause. Wessén (1965c:56) includes as certain the examples on U 654 (*Es kunni val knærri stýra* and *Es vas austr með Ingvari*): “It is not conceivable that both of these clauses beginning with **is** could be grammatically subordinate clauses; they must be accounted independent main clauses. In other words, **is** is the anaphoric pronoun ‘he’, not the relative pronoun ‘who’.”¹¹⁹ He further observes (p. 56 note 2) that it is quite possible to regard clauses beginning with **is** as independent on U 439, U 611, U 802 and DR 192 too. There is thus enough support to be able to interpret *es* on the Sigtuna plate as the anaphoric pronoun ‘he’. The sentence *Ulfr hæfir þessi sēr ok es unir* would then mean: ‘Wolf takes these and he keeps calm’.

The problem is however that it is not possible to reject the possibility of *es* representing the relative particle ‘which’ in the inscription. In this case *es* would refer back to *þessi* and thus represent a dative object (occasioned by the verb *una*) but relate to an accusative object. The placement of the relative particle *es* after the conjunction *ok* might seem surprising, although similar constructions can be found on Viking-Age runestones. One example of a relative particle being placed after the conjunction *ok* occurs on U 489: *Gullaug(?) lēt gæra brō fyr and Gillaugar, dōttur sinnar ok sum ātti Ulfr* ‘Gullaug(?) had the bridge made for the spirit of Gillaug, her daughter, and whom Ulfr owned’. There is thus nothing to syntactically prevent the interpretation of *Ulfr hæfir þessi sēr ok es unir ulfr* as ‘Wolf takes these (grabs these), and with which wolf keeps calm.’

An interesting example is also found on Vg 40: *Þōrkell satti stæin þannsi æftir Gunna, sun sinn. ER varð dauðr i orrustu, er barðus kunungar*, ‘Þorkell placed this stone in memory of Gunni, his son. He died in battle, when kings fought.’ Here *er* is used twice: first as the pronoun ‘he, who’ and later as the adverb ‘when, then’. We can thus conceive of an alternative interpretation of the final line of the inscription as ‘Wolf has these for himself, and then wolf keeps calm’. I nonetheless chose the variant with *es* as a relative particle: ‘Wolf takes these (torments and needs) and with these wolf keeps calm.’

¹¹⁸ “hellre eller lika gärna kan tolkas som huvudsatser i stället för relativsatser”

¹¹⁹ “Det är icke tänkbart, att dessa båda satser, inledda med **is**, skulle vara grammatiskt underordnade satser; de måste räknas som självständiga huvudsatser. **is** är m.a.o. ett anaforiskt pronomen ‘han’, icke ett relativt pronomen ‘som’.”

3.2.4.6 Runes 98–106 (rows B 3 och A 1–2)

The runic sequence **niut lufia** has been interpreted as an expression which may mean ‘enjoy the healing-formulas’ (Eriksson & Zetterholm, Lindquist) or ‘take the curses’ (Pipping). In order to understand the expression, I wish first to investigate the contexts in which the two words occur. The OIcel. verb *njóta*, which is formed with the genitive, means ‘have for use, avail’ (Fritzner).¹²⁰ It is used several times in the imperative form *njót* in *Íslendinga sögur*; three of these are in the expression: *njót heill handa* (or *njót þú heill handa*) ‘may you have lucky hands’ (*Njáls saga* chaps 36, 39, 131). Another case is when Grettir’s mother on giving him a sword says: *njót vel* ‘use it well’ (*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar* chap. 17). The word is also encountered in the phrase *njót þú nú sem þú hefir aflað* ‘Now you get what you have earned’ (*Njáls saga* chap. 24). We encounter the verb *njóta* several times in *Ljóðatal* as well, in the final part of *Hávamál* (164), which concludes with the words: *heill sá, er kann! Njóti sá er nam! Heilir þeirs hlýddu* ‘Lucky is the one who knows this! Use it, the one who understands it! Lucky are those who listened’. Olsen (1940:43) believes that the *njót*-formula here functions as a concluding formulation, as it does in *Sigrdrífumál* (20), where the section dealing with the use of different runes concludes with the verse: *Þat eru bókrúnar, þat eru bjargrúnar ok allar þlúrúnar ok mætar meginrúnar [...] njóttu, ef þú namt* ‘There are healing-runes, there are helping-runes, and all the ale-runes and powerful strength-runes [...] take them (use them), if you understood.’¹²¹

The runSw. verb *niūta* is attested in a further three inscriptions. The verb is in 3 pers. sg. pret. on Sm 144: **sunur naut smiþa kata** ‘The son got Kåte’s forging’. The son thus inherited the objects forged by his father Kåte or had the use of Kåte’s forge. There is a short inscription on DR 211: **þurmutr ¶ niqut : kubls Þormundr. Niut kumbls!** Erik Moltke (1985:157 f.) interprets the phrase **niqut : kubls** as ‘Make use of the monument!’ The name *Þormundr* is in the nominative, but can be functionally regarded as a vocative. It is unclear whether this is the name of the carver or the deceased, although it is probably the latter. Moltke regards this text as a kind of warding off formula which binds the deceased to the grave.

The same formula is encountered on DR 239, where the verb is also in the imperative. Moltke’s suggestion that this is a warding off formula of some kind may find some support here in the presence of a futhark formulation and the *þistill*-formula, which are not reproduced here. It is nonetheless problematic that a formula with the meaning of ‘make good use of the monument’ is directed at a revenant. If directed at the dead person, the question arises what use the deceased can have from the gravestone? The usefulness which Moltke envisages for the soul of the dead is actually of more benefit to those left behind, namely that the dead person will not return in any form. Here it is interesting

¹²⁰ ‘have til brug og nytte’

¹²¹ It is of interest to note that this verse also contains the expression *hafa sér*.

to consider an old meaning of the verb *njuta* which is preserved in the expression *njuta kyrkogården*. According to *SAOB* (N, col. 589) this means: ‘(get) have a grave in the cemetery’,¹²² and examples of the construction are attested in the seventeenth century. We can imagine that the expression *njut kumls* does not necessarily mean ‘make use of the monument’ but may be understood in the same practical sense: ‘get a grave (in your memory)’. The expression ‘have use of the cemetery’ shows that the verb ‘have use of’ could at least later be used very practically in regard to gravesites.

The noun *lyf* n. or f. (according to Noreen 1923, § 369 resp. 382) in gen. pl. *lyfia* is interpreted as ‘powerful agent which is used for one purpose or another, such as medicine, magic’ (Fritzner).¹²³ In *Gripisspá* (17), Gripir promises that after the death of Fafnir he will teach Sigurd *lif med lækning*. The word is also used in compounds, for example in *lyfsteinn* ‘stone in which there exist distinctive (especially healing, protective) powers’ (Fritzner).¹²⁴ In *Fjölsvinnsmál* 36, Freya says that she waited a long time for her lover at *Lyfjaberg* – a name which in *Lexicon Poeticum* is translated as ‘the mountain of remedies’.¹²⁵ The word can thus be used for both malevolent and benevolent magic.

An investigation of the runic inscriptions which contain this word makes this relationship even clearer. The word *lyf* is found in the compound **lufrunar** on the Skänninge plate (Ög NOR2001;32). In this inscription the word is evidently used for healing magic. It is next encountered in a different compound, *lif-tungæ*, on a rune-stick from Ribe (DR EM85;493), here with the verb *liuæ* (*lyfja*) ‘heal’: *þæt hann læ mik læknæshand ok lif-tungæ at liuæ* ‘that he give me healing hands and healing tongue to heal’. In addition to these two cases, the word occurs in the dative form *lyfum* on a rune-stick from Bryggen (N B99) dated to around the fourteenth century. The inscription reads in translation: ‘Never would the woman (= I) love those who resisted magic’. The meaning here is ‘malevolent magic’. I interpret *lyf* as ‘healing magic’ on the Roskilde plate as well (see section 6.1.2).

Fritzner also cites v. *lyfja* ‘cure someone of something’.¹²⁶ The verb *lyfja* is not particularly common in Old West Scandinavian but it is found in later Scandinavian languages. For example, the verb *lövja* is attested in *SAOB* (L, col. 1970) from the sixteenth century, with the meaning given as ‘with magical arts (especially spells) strengthen or cure or protect (someone or something)’.¹²⁷

Everything indicates that the word *lyf* was most often used in runic inscriptions to signify benevolent rather than malevolent magic. Raudvere (2002:144) notes that “in Old Norse the nouns *taufr* and *lyf* can refer to knowledge of heal-

¹²² ‘(få) ha gravplats på kyrkogården’

¹²³ ‘kraftigt middel, der benyttes till et eller andet øiemed saasom lægedom, troldom’

¹²⁴ ‘sten hos hvilken der findes særegne (især helbredende, beskyttende) kræfter’

¹²⁵ ‘lægemidlers bjærg’

¹²⁶ ‘helbrede en for noget’

¹²⁷ ‘med magiska konster (i synnerhet besvärjelser) stärka eller bota eller skydda (ngn eller ngt)’

ing; but are mostly used in their negative meaning of damage or destruction.” To judge from our examples, *lyf* was on the contrary seldom used for malevolent magic. I prefer to translate *lufia* on the Sigtuna plate neutrally as ‘magical agent’ or more precisely as ‘remedy, healing formula’.

The question remains whether this phrase is directed at the demon of disease who is being driven away or to the sick person. Eriksson and Zetterholm (1933: 144) regard it as more likely to be aimed at the wearer of the plate with the meaning ‘Enjoy the healing!’ or ‘Use the sorcery’, despite their suggestion that the word *niut* “could be understood as referring to *pursa dróttinn* on side A or *ulfr* in the preceding on side B and be intended ironically”.¹²⁸ Eriksson and Zetterholm (p. 154) also observe that the phrase accords with the tradition of concluding a wish for a sick person to be cured with the words: ‘Give N.N. his/her health again’, ‘Let N.N. get his/her health back’, ‘Take your lack of health and give me my health back’. It is interesting to note here that these parallels are not actually directed at the sick person but to evil beings: they are therefore not wholly comparable, since the authors believe that the phrase ‘Enjoy the healing!’ or ‘Use the sorcery’ is directed at the sick person.

Lindquist (1936:44) interprets the phrase as ‘Make use of the remedy (healing-formulas?)’ and he also regards it as directed at the wearer of the plate or, in line with his interpretation of the previous sentence, to the one ‘who looks at it and in whom the wolf wants to stay’.¹²⁹ All other researchers who have interpreted the text have chosen the same alternative apart from Pipping, who prefers a more original sense for the verb *njóta* ‘catch’. Pipping (1933:10 f.) believes that “*njóta* with a following genitive could be translated as ‘reap the fruit (even if bitter) of something’, ‘bear the consequences of something’”.¹³⁰ His translation of *njót lyfia* is therefore ‘May you be affected by (my) curses’.¹³¹

A sense which is close to ‘bear the consequences of something’ is found in an example from *Njáls saga* (chap. 24): *njót þú nú sem þú hefir aflað* ‘now you get what you have earned’. Even the formulation found on runestones, *niut kumbls*, is likely to mean something similar, i.e. ‘get a memorial (in your memory)’ rather than ‘make use of’. The example on Sm 144 also shows that the verb *niūta* could mean ‘succeed to, come into possession of, enjoy the inheritance’. The examples from *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífumál* also seem to have the sense of ‘take, get’ rather than ‘have use of, use’. All of this suggests understanding the verb as directed to the *ulfr*, not in an ironic way but quite seriously. It should thus be interpreted as ‘Receive the curse!’ The ambiguity of the concluding phrase cannot be denied, however, and it could have been intended both for the demon of disease as well as the sick person. Both the sick

¹²⁸ “kunde fattas såsom åsyftande *pursa dróttinn* på sida A eller *ulfr* i det föregående på sida B och vara ironiskt menat”

¹²⁹ “som ser på det och som ulven vill hålla till i”

¹³⁰ “*njóta* med följande genitiv kunde översättas med ‘skörda frukten (även en bitter sådan) av någonting’, ‘bära följderna av någonting’”

¹³¹ “Må du drabbas av (mina) besvärjelser.”

person and *ulfr* receive the incantation, but it is hoped that one of them enjoys the results while the other suffers the consequences of his attack.

3.2.5 Summary

My proposed interpretation of the entire inscription is:

A: 1 þurs_×_sarriþu × þursa

2 trutin fliu þu nufuntin is

B: 1 af þir þriar þrar ulf ×

2 af þir niu nobir ulfr---

3 ifir þisi sir auk is unir ulfr niut lu ¶ fia

A: *Þurs sārriðu, þursa dröttinn!*

Flý þū nū! Fundinn es (þurs sārriðu, þursa dröttinn ...)

B: *(H)af þēr þriar þrār, ulf, (h)af þēr nīu nauðir!*

Ulfr (h)æfir þessi sēr auk es unir ulfr. Niūt lyfia!

A: Wound-fever's troll, lord of trolls!

You flee now! Found is (the wound-fever's troll, lord of trolls ...)

B: May three torments take you, wolf, may nine needs take you!

The wolf takes these (torments and needs) and with these the wolf remains calm. Use the magic charm!

The text that we obtain from the Sigtuna plate is thus a spell with several elements which are typical of an exhortative formula: 1) a direct command to a supernatural being, who is named in different ways for the purpose of being driven away; 2) a partly three-fold repetition of these names ('wolf' is repeated three times, while 'wound-fever's troll, lord of trolls' is in my new translation repeated an infinite number of times). Lindquist's proposal that the three *íss*-runes contributed a cryptographic element to the text rests on an unreliable translation.

The greatest advantage of my interpretation of row 3 on side B of the inscription is that it corresponds to the words of the previous lines: 'May three torments take you, wolf, may nine needs take you!' and in this way constitutes a natural continuation of these. We thus arrive at a meaning which affirms the result of the preceding curse and fully corresponds with it. Such formulations of affirmation are also found in other spells. Thus the fever-bone from Sigtuna (see section 3.2.2) contains the phrase *Ok siða(?) sarð sāra-rann. Vara hafir (hann) fullt fengit* 'And the sorcery destroyed the wound-house. (He, It) has completely caught the pus.' On the Ribe skull (DR EM85;151B), if Stoklund's (1996:201 f.) interpretation is correct, is a similar affirming phrase: *Auk dverg unninn* 'And the dwarf (is) overcome.' The inscription on a rune-stick from Ribe (DR EM85;493) similarly ends with *Amen ok þat sé*, which may also be interpreted as affirmation of a result.

Something should perhaps be said about the overall structure of the inscription. The first three building blocks in the incantation against the demon of disease were established by Lindquist (1936:40): 1) The demon is named: ‘Wound-fever’s troll, lord of trolls’; 2) The demon is driven away: ‘You flee now! Found is ...’; 3) The demon is cursed: ‘May three torments take you, wolf, may nine needs take you!’ I can now suggest a further two components: 4) The result is affirmed or acknowledged: ‘The wolf takes these (torments and needs) and with these the wolf remains calm’; 5) The spell concludes with one further command: ‘Use the magic charm!’

Further support for the fourth and fifth components having a more general application can be found in the inscription on the fever-bone from Sigtuna being nearly identical in structure with that on the Sigtuna plate; only the imprecatory phrase (no 3 on the Sigtuna plate) is missing. The bone’s inscription thus consists of the components: 1) The demon is named: ‘Jorill’s (wound)stick/Joril’s abnormal stomach-ache!’; 2) The demon is driven away: Grow out of Krok!’; 3) The result is affirmed: ‘He (i.e. the enchanter) bound the fever, crushed(?) the fever. And the sorcery destroyed the wound-house. (He) has completely caught the pus’; 4) The incantation concludes with further support (a new banishment phrase): ‘Flee away, fever!’

It is also worth repeating that the first four lines of text on the Sigtuna plate alliterate. I am nonetheless unwilling to attempt to determine the extent to which the inscription is composed in verse, as for example Ros (1990:135) does when he suggests that the metre of the inscription is *galdralag*. I am more inclined to believe that the inscription lacks a cohesive verse metre since it consists of different phrases of banishment, which would presumably have been interchangeable.

3.2.5.1 The wolf and the troll – how are they linked?

It now remains to attempt to determine exactly what kind of wolf the inscription is driving off. Eriksson and Zetterholm (1933:149 f.) have suggested that the curse is directed “against the [night]mare or werewolf”¹³² (p. 150). The inscriptional **ulfr** and **pursa trutin** in their opinion (p. 149) refer to the same thing, namely “the special type of evil with which the entire spell is concerned”.¹³³ They base their suggestion, referring to Rietz’ dialectal dictionary, on the fact that the words *tuss* and *tusse* (which correspond to OIcel. *purs* and *puss*) in several Swedish dialects can have the meaning of ‘wolf’. The word *tuss* occurs in the names of several diseases according to Reichborn-Kjennerud (1928:55), e.g. *tussebit*, *tuss-slag* ‘tuss-bite, tuss-attack’ and so forth. The additional statement that “*tuss* as regards diseases of animals is the same as *mara*”¹³⁴ led Eriksson and Zetterholm to their consideration of the mare. They

¹³² “mot mara eller varulv”

¹³³ “det speciella slag av ont, som hela besvärjelsen gäller”

¹³⁴ “*tuss* om sykdom på dyr er det samme som *mara*”

write (1933:150), again with reference to Reichborn-Kjennerud, that there is a link between conceptions of the mare and different forms of fever (*riða*) which are encountered in Old Norse literature in compounds such as *trollriða*, *kveldriða*, *hornriða* and *sjóriða*, all of which are defined as ‘mare’ in ÁBM. The authors do not suggest however that the **sarriþu** of the inscription should be understood as such a feminine being. They cite (p. 149) two Norwegian formulas (Bang 1901–1902 nos 51 and 59) which, like the Sigtuna inscription, name the ‘wolf’ three times and challenge him. These formulas, in their opinion, may be directed at the mare, although Bang has entitled them ‘Troll with addition’ and ‘Wolf who belongs to the troll’.¹³⁵ The relationship between the ‘wolf’ and the ‘troll’ is made even clearer in these formulas: ‘wolf’ could function as a synonym for ‘troll’.

Eriksson and Zetterholm’s suggestion that the inscription could act as a form of protection against the werewolf may nonetheless be questioned, as we know of no “formulas or recitations against werewolves, which were never considered as a disease”¹³⁶ (Raudvere 1993:159). The proposed curse against the mare is more feasible however. There exist spells challenging the mare (Raudvere 1993:162), who could sometimes be identified as the devil (p. 168), although this was “unusual in formula texts”.¹³⁷ There is then little reason not to identify her with the troll, a possibility which Eriksson and Zetterholm support with the Norwegian names of several diseases which compound *mara* and *tuss* (*burs*). Raudvere (p. 127) provides an example of an account calling the mare a troll: “The mare was ‘a troll who lay herself over a person at night’”,¹³⁸ although the aim here is actually to show the blurred boundaries between different beings in her material: “The name of the creature reveals a great deal about how the narrator imagines the creature, and the mare should primarily be defined according to what she does (presses, pushes, torments), rather than what she is called.”¹³⁹ It is nonetheless clear that the mare could be conceived of as an immaterial being – a spirit or revenant. Bengt af Klintberg (1973:25) observes that embracing by ghouls and riding by the mare could be mixed up in folk tradition: “This is not due to any striking resemblances between the conceptions of their origin and appearance but on the fact that both have given names to symptoms of sickness that in popular tradition occur during the night.”¹⁴⁰

The mare could also be conceived of as an animal, most often a cat or a mouse but sometimes as a different fur-covered or hairy creature (Raudvere

¹³⁵ “Tillæg til Trolde”; “Ulv som hører till Trolde”

¹³⁶ “formler eller läsningar mot varulvar, vilka aldrig betraktades som en sjukdom”

¹³⁷ “ovanligt i formeltexterna”

¹³⁸ “Maran var ‘eit troll som læg sej yver ein um nøtene’.”

¹³⁹ “Namnet på varelsen avslöjar en hel del om hur berättaren tänker sig väsendet, och primärt bör maran definieras efter vad hon gör (trycker, pressar, plågar), inte efter vad hon kallas.”

¹⁴⁰ “Det beror inte på några slående likheter mellan föreställningarna om deras ursprung och utseende utan på det folkmedicinska faktum att de båda har gett namn åt sjukdomstillstånd som inträffar nattetid.”

1993:124). There are few spells against the mare (p. 159) and they “comprise a quantitatively very small part of the recorded tradition [about the mare]”, but they “convey an emotional presence which is still notable in its strength. They are constructed as direct forms of address and confrontation. They are often built around polarisation or parallelisation and have certain repeated symbols. The mare is implicitly defined in the formulas and recitations as a sickness affecting people and animals.”¹⁴¹ It is thus far from impossible that the Sigtuna inscription, which is also constructed as a direct address and which confronts an evil being, comprised protection against the mare. It is nonetheless equally possible that the ‘troll’ and the ‘wolf’ addressed in the inscription represented a different form of illness or, as proposed by von Friesen, a magically sent wolf which has become a troll.

Lindquist (1936:35) nonetheless finds Eriksson and Zetterholm’s proposal “unnecessary and hardly designed to clarify matters”.¹⁴² He prefers a different disease, namely childbed fever, a severe infection affecting postpartum women. He reached the same conclusion in his earlier monograph (1932:78 f.) with the help of Reichborn-Kjennerud, in whose work he found a record from Sätedal (Norway) that *tussen beit nedfallskona* ‘the *tuss* bit the woman giving birth’. Reichborn-Kjennerud assumes (according to Lindquist) that this attestation in Norwegian folk belief that labouring women’s torment was caused by the *turs* might explain the line *purs vældr kuenna kuillu* ‘the *turs* causes women torment’ in the Norwegian rune poem, a mnemonic verse giving the names of the runes. A similar phrase occurs in an Icelandic runic poem, copies of which can be dated to the sixteenth century: *þ er kvenna kvöl ok kletta íbúi* (Page 1999, cf. Bauer 2003:141 f.). Further support for the idea that a *purs* can occasion women distress is found in the curse from *Skírnismál* with which Skirne threatens the giantess Gerd if she does not give her love to Frey. This concludes in verse 36: *Purs rísti ek þér ok þría stafí, ergi ok æði ok óþola* ‘*Purs* may I carve you and three staves, lust, anger and impatience’; Gerd capitulates after this verse and reaches an agreement with Frey. It is possible that the driving away of a troll or *turs* may indicate violence. Alaric Hall (2009:195) suggests that the reason for the illnesses called *pursar* “could be the transgression of moral norms”. In the case of Gerd, *pursar* have caused her defeat. Hall (p. 215) also remarks “[t]hat *purs* as sexual torment might overlap conceptually with the *purs* as illness is consistent to some extent with the comparisons adduced above for the concept of monster as illness: the image of Anglo-Saxon *dweorgas* and *maran* inflicting fever by riding their victims arguably has sexual connotations.”

¹⁴¹ “utgör en kvantitativt mycket liten del av de upptecknade traditionerna [om maran]”; “förmedlar ett emotionellt presens som fortfarande drabbar i styrka. De är konstruerade som direkt tilltal och konfrontation. De är ofta uppbyggda med polarisering eller parallellisering och har vissa återkommande symboler. Maran definieras implicit i formlerna och läsningarna som en sjukdom hos människor och djur.”

¹⁴² “opå kallat och föga ägnat att rättleda”

One may further observe that Solberga plates 1 and 2 were carved for a labouring woman to repel *tursar*. On the Sigtuna plate, however, we have no specification of the wearer, and thus cannot say with the same degree of certainty that the *turs* is being driven away from a woman in childbirth.

Nordén (1943:170) regards the word *ulfr* as a designation for ‘night wolf’: “And as concerns this ‘night wolf’, he, like the mare, could be the apparition of an evil dead person, and thus need not be the nightly apparition of a living one.”¹⁴³ Pipping (1933:9) regards *ulfr* as a general description of an evil creature or monster, the same evil creature which plagues women and which is driven away in the inscription according to his own interpretation. This broad meaning of ‘monster’ attracted the attention of Lindquist (1932:59): “It is well known that the word *ulfr* could be used in the general sense of ‘harmful creature, monster, robber’ in poetry.”¹⁴⁴ He nevertheless observed that the word is then usually accompanied by an attribute, most often in the genitive, and he therefore chose not to consider the *ulfr* of the Sigtuna plate in such a general sense. I agree with Lindquist that the lack of any attribute renders this solution, despite its attractive simplicity, less probable.

The possibility of considering the word *ulfr* as the name of a disease in its own right rather than another name for the *turs* is rejected by Lindquist (1932:60), despite his short account of such sickness terms in different languages. He reminds us of the West Germanic name for cancer – *wolf* – with reference to several relevant dictionaries. After this report he assumes that the corresponding word *lou(p)/lupus* ‘wolf’, found in Old French and Mediaeval Latin, may well be a calque from Germanic. Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm (1960) observe that “in medical examples such as Lat. *lupus*, Fr. *loup*, *wolf* designates ‘different skin diseases’”,¹⁴⁵ and provide examples, the earliest of which is from c. 1470.

The word *lupus* came in Swedish to be used as a designation for “different types of necrotic wounds”¹⁴⁶ (Lagerkranz 1983:38), and has now also come to describe chronic skin diseases of different types (Lindskog 2008:370). One particular ulcerative disease is thus called *lupus vulgaris* (skin tuberculosis) and another skin disease with outbreaks typically on the cheeks and bridge of the nose *systemic lupus erythematosus* (a chronic autoimmune rheumatic disease). The designation of skin diseases with the name *ulv* or later *lupus* depends either on the appearance of the wound or on the rapacious character of the disease. It is also easy to explain why the name *lupus* came to be used instead of *ulv*: in earlier times people often avoided saying dangerous taboo names, instead employing so-called *noa* words. The words *tasse* ‘pawed one’, *gråben*

¹⁴³ “Och vad denna ‘nattulv’ beträffar, kan han liksom maran vara uppenbarelsen av en redan död ond människa, behöver alltså ej vara den nattliga uppenbarelsen av en levande.”

¹⁴⁴ “Det är bekant, att ordet *ulfr* kunde brukas i en allmän betydelse ‘skadeligt väsen, uhyre, røver’ i poesien.”

¹⁴⁵ “in der medizin. wie lat. *lupus*, frz. *loup* bezeichnet *wolf* ‘verschiedene hautoerkrankungen’”

¹⁴⁶ “olika slag av omkring sig frätande sår”

‘greyleg’ or *gullfot* ‘gold foot’, for example, were preferred to *ulv* or *varg* (Lindquist 1932:64, see also Fridell 2005:30–31).

It is tempting to try to provide an accurate diagnosis of the complaint from which the wearer of the plate suffered, but this is unfortunately impossible. Nor can we therefore determine whether *ulfr* in the curse is a designation for a particular type of skin disease. As I have shown above, we cannot dismiss the possibility that *ulfr* in the inscription is used simply as a kind of synonym for *purs*.

3.2.6 Dating of the Sigtuna plate

The dating provided for the inscription on the plate in SRD is the eleventh century. Eriksson and Zetterholm (1933:137) suggested that the inscription should be dated to around or before 1050, and were careful to point out that “the carving cannot easily have occurred as late as during the end of the eleventh century.”¹⁴⁷ The inscription is nonetheless often regarded as early mediaeval and dated to the second half or end of the eleventh century. It then remains to be considered whether any unexplored runic possibility allows the inscription to be dated to the beginning, middle or close of the eleventh century.¹⁴⁸

The yew-rune and the *reið*-rune are of no use in dating the inscription: here **r** is used post-vocally, which was possible in both the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Larsson 2002:118–131). It is interesting that the *reið*-rune is used in one of the two attestations of the word **ulfr** instead of the expected yew-rune (the second attestation lacks the nominative ending *-r*). This is of course a sign that the pronunciation had already shifted from /r/ to /r/, but it does not help to date the plate more closely than to the eleventh or twelfth century (see Larsson 2002:131 f.). The *óss*-rune is used only once in the inscription, in the word ‘needs’ **noþir**, where it presumably represents /ø:/, the product of contraction of the older diphthong /au/ (as suggested by Källström 1999:110, n. 1). Perhaps indicative of the beginning of the eleventh century is the form of the *óss*-rune with double-sided branches ascending on the right. The same form is used by the carver Torbjörn (U 391), who was active in the area around Sigtuna c. 1000–1050 (Källström 1999:37, 136). Torbjörn consistently uses this form of the rune. It is relatively rare in Uppland, but is connected to certain carvers or groups of stones, as exemplified by the Ingvar stones and the self-erected Jarlabanke stones (Källström 1999:110). The *óss*-rune on the comb-spine U NOR2000;29, which dates to the eleventh century, has a similar form. The variant of the **o**-rune which is otherwise most commonly used has branches pointing downwards on the right.

¹⁴⁷ “ristningen ej gärna kan ha tillkommit så sent som under slutet av 1000-talet”

¹⁴⁸ In MacLeod & Mees (2006:118) the plate is dated from the “mid-to-late eleventh century”. McKinnell & al. (2004:126) also date it to the end of the eleventh century or later. Gustavson & Källström (2016:21) observe that the plate was found “where the topsoil ends and the bottom till begins” (“där matjorden slutar och pinnmon tar vid”), which indicates that the plate belongs to the oldest phase of building at the site, i.e. post-1050.

Another fact which suggests that a dating to the beginning of the eleventh century should be considered is the rendition of the verb *fly* as **fliu**. The diphthong /iū/ after consonant + /r/ or /l/ changed to /ȳ/ “as early as the pre-literate period”¹⁴⁹ according to Wessén (1965a:34). One might observe that the verb ‘flee’ is carved as **fly** on the Kvinneby plate and the Sigtuna bone. The potential preservation of the diphthong /iū/ on the Sigtuna plate could be indicative of a relatively great age. Lindquist (1932:27) writes that **iu** can be regarded “either as a digraphic spelling of *fló* = Old Icelandic *fló*, younger *flý*, Old Swedish *fly* [...], or as sound by sound spelling of a pronunciation *fliu*”.¹⁵⁰ Lindquist’s normalisation indicates that he favours the second suggestion and believes that the Sigtuna plate has preserved the diphthong /iū/.

Williams (1996:54 f.) examines how early the sound transition /iū/ > /ȳ/ could have occurred in Sweden. He provides examples of two Upplandic attestations which show the transition to y-vocalism: U 344 (Pr 3) and U 818 (Fp?). These examples indicate that the transition had already occurred by the middle of the eleventh century in Uppland. Might this mean that the Sigtuna inscription belongs to an earlier time period? The digraph **iu** for /y(:)/ is moreover extremely uncommon with no certain attestations (some uncertain evidence is discussed in Lagman 1990:25 f. and p. 37, fn. 11). I therefore believe that the spelling **iu** is more indicative of a preserved diphthong /iu/ than a digraph for the phoneme /y/, which would mean that the Sigtuna plate most likely dates from the first half of the eleventh century.

The carver of the Sigtuna plate did not use dotted runes, although this is of no help in dating the plate. Lagman (1990:154) concludes that the number of dotted runes increased towards the end of the eleventh century, but he simultaneously observes that “the dotted runes are however not suited for dating more closely.”¹⁵¹

Nor do the long-branch runes in the inscription provide much information about its age. There is no sharp border between short-twig and long-branch in this area which could have aided in dating, but the long-branch forms nevertheless show that the inscription should belong to the eleventh rather than the twelfth century. The double-writing of the **r**-rune in the first line of the inscription on side A may be a sign of its production at the end of the Viking Age, although other examples of this occurring early in the Viking Age can be adduced. The **t**-rune is thus employed twice in a row in the Oklunda carving (Ög N288), which is dated to the beginning of the ninth century, here presumably because of the word boundary occurring in between (Källström 2007a:100 f.).

Graphonomic, orthographic and linguistic analysis of the inscription favours a dating to the eleventh century. While a date later than 1050 is not an

¹⁴⁹ “redan förlitterärt”

¹⁵⁰ “antingen som en digrafisk stavning av *fló* = fornisländskans *fló*, yngre *flý*, fornsvenskans *fly* [...], eller som stavning ljud för ljud av en uttalsform *fliu*”

¹⁵¹ “För en närmare tidfastning lämpar sig de stungna runorna däremot inte.”

impossibility, I affirm that the inscription contains no certain indications of a dating to the second half of the eleventh century. There are on the contrary two indications of a relatively great age: the form *es* for the verb *vesa* either in 3 or 2 pers. sg. pres. and the form *fliū* which has not yet become *fly*. The form of the *óss*-rune may also indicate a dating to the first half of the eleventh century.

3.3 The Kvinneby plate (Öl SAS1989;43), Öland

3.3.1 Find circumstances

The thin, quadrilateral plate (Figure 17) measures 52×49 mm; it is c. 1.5 mm thick. It was found in 1955 in a yard in Södra Kvinneby, Stenåsa parish, in south-east Öland. One edge has a suspension hole. An archaeological context is lacking: the object was found by Dagmar Johansson as she was digging in her garden, but Ivar Lindquist (1987:11) observes that the finder told him that workers discovered two prehistoric graves when excavating the earth for her villa. These were never investigated; the object may however have comprised grave goods. It is now kept at SHM with inventory number 25654.

The inscription on the plate is in boustrophedon style which runs over two sides: five rows on side A and four on side B. The final row on side B terminates with a picture of a fish. The runes are long-branch and there are three dotted runes: *e*, *y* and *g*. For simplicity, I will refer to the object as the Kvinneby plate instead of the more correct Södra (South) Kvinneby plate.

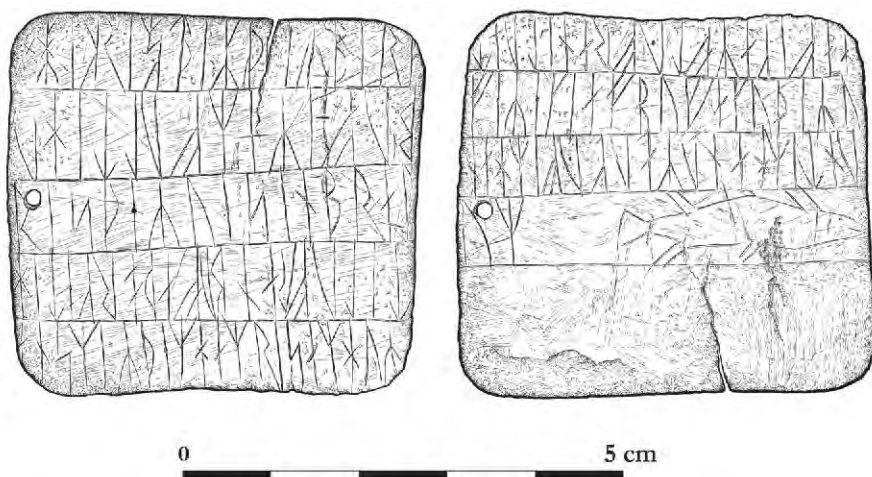


Figure 17. The Kvinneby plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

3.3.2 Earlier readings and interpretations

An anonymous journalist first published the plate on January 29th, 1957, in *Dagens Nyheter*; this was a small notice with a photograph of the object's obverse and a short commentary on the circumstances of discovery. In the same year, Sven B. F. Jansson (1957:75) published a clean sketch of the plate together with his comments on the reading. The first attempt to interpret the inscription was made by Ivar Lindquist in *Stockholmstidningen* on February 28th, 1957. For reasons which remain unclear, scholars working on the inscription refer to Lindquist's attempts at interpretation in *Dagens Nyheter*: I have however been unsuccessful in finding his interpretation there, and it seems to be a misunderstanding of the fact that Lindquist based his reading on the photograph accompanying the anonymous report in *Dagens Nyheter*. Lindquist was unsuccessful in reading the runes correctly on his first attempt at interpretation, which is unsurprising; he also unfortunately had no access to a photograph of the reverse of the plate. He did however manage to interpret one sentence correctly, namely the phrase 'may Thor preserve him with his hammer'.

The next publication did not occur until thirteen years later, when Wolfgang Krause (1993 [1970]:56) presented his understanding of the plate's text: "This inscription is without a doubt fishing magic, directed against a 'boy' (*bove*) whom 'Thor may fetch'."¹⁵² Krause's interpretation was followed by seven different ones, as well as a few contaminations, which will be presented and discussed below. With his proposal and the two contaminations we have a total of nine attempts at interpretation. Last in section 3.3.3 is a summary of all of these attempts: from this I have however excluded Bruce Nilsson's first interpretation (1973), the contamination by McKinnell & al. (2004) as well as those by Krause (1970) and MacLeod & Mees (2006). (Nilsson's first interpretation may be regarded as superseded by his later proposal, while the contaminations offer no new ideas for interpretation.)

To begin with I reproduce the clean sketch (Figure 18) of the plate's runes published by Jansson in 1957 (note that this is given here in Westlund's [1989:45] supplemented version). Jansson's commentary on the reading of the runes is of great value, since this was made without any attempt to interpret the inscription. It may seem redundant to point this out. It is however of great importance as we can observe the opposite in a number of later readings and interpretations, where above all assumptions about the presence of dotted runes has been dependent on the process of interpretation. Jansson's sketch was improved by Westlund (1989: 45), who turned all the rows in the same direction and added two runes: rune 3 received an upper bow, and rune 94 a dot. In the continuation I do not provide other readings but only normalisations and translations. The readings diverge primarily as concerns the opening runes and a few dotted runes, for which reason I believe that a commentary of these differences and referral to the sketch will suffice.

Nor will I take a position here on whether or not the readings are correct (this is done in the catalogue, no 40), but intend only to comment on the linguistics

¹⁵² "Es handelt sich bei dieser Inschrift zweifellos um einen Fischzauber, der sich gegen einen 'Buben' (*bove*) richtet, den 'Thor holen möge'."

3.3.2.1 Bruce Nilsson's interpretations from 1973 and 1976

Nilsson investigated the inscription himself and made two attempts at interpretation. I will first discuss the earliest of these (1973:223–230) which can be found in his thesis *The Runic Inscriptions of Öland*. This first complete interpretation of the inscription has in fact never been discussed by other scholars working on the inscription. Nilsson's reading fully agrees with Jansson's original sketch (i.e. r. 3 lacks an upper bow and r. 94 is undotted). He regards the first five runes as magical signs, leaving them unread. He also reads runes 8 and 9 as the simple runes **ᚱ** and **ᚢ**, but does not explain why some of their branches are disregarded.

I cite Nilsson's normalisation into runic Swedish (with no marking of vowel length) below, as well as his translation into English (1973:226). Later in the text I reproduce normalised words from Nilsson's reading with vowel length and his translations into English, which he made with the help of Cleasby and Vigfusson's dictionary.

*Tirr þer berr-k,
Bofi, mer fulltingu
þess seiðar. Visan berr allt
ill ufran Bofa. Þorr gæti
hans mer þæim hamri sam hyrr-
hafi kam. Fly fran illu. Vitt
ferr ekki af Bofa goða ro,
undir hanum ok yfir han-
um.*

Honor to thee bear I, Bove,
with help of this charm. The stanza
bears all evil from Bove. May Thor
protect him with that hammer that
came from 'the sea of fire' (i.e., gold).
Flee from evil. Favorable calm does not
fare widely from Bove, (favorable calm)
under him and over him.

Nilsson's interpretation has several strong points, including the overall impression of cohesion. It nevertheless contains several ungrammatical constructions and obscure spellings which demand better explanations than simply being due to carver error. Commentary is also lacking in many places: there is for example no convincing explanation of why the first five runes of the opening might be magic; nor is the reading of **ᚱ** and **ᚢ** for the eighth and ninth runes discussed.

The word *seiðar* (gen. sg. of *seiðr* m. 'spell, charm, incantation') is apparently read from the runic sequence **spēr** (rr. 32–35), which requires the reader to recognise a carving error. Nilsson must in fact suppose that the carver forgot to carve a rune, although he provides no reason for this oversight. The same ap-

plies to the sequence **br** (rr. 41–42), which he reads as *ber* (3 pers. sg. pret. of the verb *bera* ‘to bear, carry’). Comment is lacking on the unusual definite form of the runic Swedish word *vīsan* (nom. sg. of *vīsa* f. ‘strophe, stanza’) at the end of the eleventh century. It is moreover unclear why the second **i**-rune in the sequence **uisin** (rr. 36–40) would designate /a/. The word *fulltingu* n. ‘help’ can hardly be read from the sequence **fulthihu** (rr. 23–29), since the **h**-rune cannot represent /g/ when occurring after /n/. The word *tīrr* m. ‘glory, renown’ (rr. 6–8; the word should otherwise be normalised to *tīr* in acc. sg.) also requires explanation, since it must have been written with an unetymological **r**: **tīr**. The words *hyrr-hafi* dat. sg. ‘the sea of fire’ (rr. 82–88 **hurhafi**) and *ferr* 3 pers. sg. pres. of the verb *fara* ‘to go, to travel’ (rr. 104–106 **fer**) show the same problem with their unetymological **r**-spellings. The expression *gōða rō* ‘favorable calm’ is read from the runic sequence **kupīru** (rr. 116–121), which offers two problems: it is unclear why the **i**-rune would designate /a/ in *gōða*; it is also improbable that *rō* f. ‘rest, calm, quietness’ would be written as **ru**. Nilsson’s (1973:229) explanation that the carver could mix up **r** and **r**-runes during the time in question is difficult to accept without further commentary or examples. The carver of the Kvinneby inscription, moreover, otherwise consistently distinguishes between the runes **r** and **r**. The syntax in the sentence *Vitt ferr ekki av Bōfa gōða rō, undir hanum ok yfir hanum* also appears remarkable. Nilsson interprets *vitt* as adv. ‘widely’ and the expression *gōða rō* as accusative: the sentence thus lacks a subject and is therefore incomprehensible. The sentence *vīsan berr allt ill ufrān Bōfa* is also problematic. Nilsson’s reasons for considering *ill* to be in acc. sg. (he does not specify the gender) are unclear, as the adjective *illr* ‘evil’ has the form *ill* in n. nom. and acc. pl. or f. nom. sg. *Allt* should then have been *all* (or *qll*) in n. acc. pl. The sentence is thus ungrammatical.

Nilsson resolves some of these problems in his second interpretation (1976: 237–245); his new version is on the whole a great improvement. He again follows Jansson’s reading, except that he now counts 144 runes in the inscription rather than 143; this is achieved by considering the punctuation mark at the beginning of the inscription as an uninterpretable rune. He also reads **r**. 30 (31 in his new numbering) as **r** rather than **p** and rune 94 (95) as an undotted **u**-rune. I comment on his reading in the catalogue (no 40), and reproduce his normalisation into runic Swedish (again with no marking of vowel length) and his translation into English (1976:238 f.) below:

*Tir þer ber-k,
Bofi. Mer fullty! Hvar
es þer vissi? En ber alt
i illu fran Bofa. Þorr gæti
hans mer þæim hamri sam ur
hafi kam, flo fran illu. Vit
ferr æigi af Bofa. Guð eru
undir hanum ok yfir han-
um.*

Glory to thee bear I,
 Bove. Help me! Who
 is wiser than thee? And bear all
 in (the form of) evil from Bove. May Thor protect
 him with that hammer that came from
 the sea (and which) fled from evil. Wit
 fares not from Bove. The gods are
 under him and over him.

Nilsson's second interpretation, like his first, has not been considered by later scholars. For no clear reason, Ivar Lindquist (1987:15) chooses to take no position on it, despite borrowing from it the word **haf** 'sea', while Westlund focuses only on criticising Lindquist's complicated interpretations. Jonna Louis-Jensen and Ottar Grønvik in their turn concentrate on the interpretations of Lindquist and Westlund, and it appears that they consider Nilsson's simply too weak to be worthy of attention. Grønvik (1992:73) presumably agrees with Lindquist when he states for example that "Lindquist considered that he could not build anything on this interpretation".¹⁵³ This is extremely unfair. Nilsson was despite all else the first to attempt to interpret the entire inscription and he offered several plausible solutions, particularly in his second interpretation. These include the name *Bōfi* and the phrases *Þōrr gæti hans mer þæim hamri sam ur hafī kam* and *Guð eru undir hanum ok yfir hanum*. The interpretation does of course have its weaknesses, which we shall now consider.

Nilsson still does not explain why he interprets the first runes as magical signs. He attempts to defend his reading of runes 8 and 9 (9–10 in his new numbering) as **ᚱ** and **ᚢ** respectively as carving errors (1976:238), which is hardly convincing. In this interpretation, Nilsson again considers that the carver overlooked a number of runes; he interprets **hur** (rr. 28–30 [29–31]) as *hvar* 'who', for example, and **br** (rr. 41–42 [42–43]) as *ber* 3 pers. sg. pres. of the verb *bera* 'to bear'. It is furthermore problematic that the interr. pron. *hvar* is carved with the *reið*-rune, although Nilsson (p. 239) here provides examples of similar confusions of the yew-rune and *reið*-rune which show that his suggestion is in fact possible.

Nilsson's reading of rune 94 (95) as **u** is erroneous, although it allows him to interpret the sequence **flu** as 3 pers. sg. pret. *flō* of the verb *flyia* 'flee' (rather than imp. *fly*, as in his first interpretation). The phrase 'fled from evil' is left hanging with no real connection to either the preceding or following sentences. He interprets (p. 241) the runic sequence **uit** (rr. 101–103 [102–104]) as *vit* n. acc. sg. 'wit, understanding', but it remains unclear to me why he believes that the word should be in the accusative in the sentence 'Wit fares not from Bove'.

¹⁵³ "Denne tolkning fant Lindquist at han ikke kunne bygge noe på."

There are further syntactic irregularities. Thus in the phrase *En ber alt ī illu frān Bōfa* ‘And bear all in (the form of evil) from Bove’, Nilsson identifies the preposition *ī* with the meaning ‘in the form of, in regard to, in the matter of’, which appears unnecessary and far-fetched.

Nilsson believes that Bove was the wearer of the amulet, and that the purpose of the inscription was to protect him at sea. The picture of the fish indicates to him that Bove was a fisherman. He also suggests that the fins of the fish represent cryptic runes of some kind, and regards the inscription as poetic.

3.3.2.2 Ivar Lindquist’s interpretation from 1987

Lindquist worked on the inscription for more than 30 years, but his work was first published posthumously (Lindquist 1987) by Gösta Holm from the manuscript he left behind. The text therefore contains many different proposals for interpretation which the author had not had time to sift through. Fortunately there are extensive commentaries on Lindquist’s great work: Anders Hultgård (1988) reviewed Lindquist’s understanding of the conception of the world underlying the inscription and noted a number of weak and strong aspects of his overall interpretation. Westlund (1989) made sound comments on all of Lindquist’s suggestions in his brief discussion. Ottar Grønvik (1992) also discussed Lindquist’s interpretations of side A of the inscription.

The reading by Lindquist is somewhat contradictory, as he states (1987:21) that the dotting of runes 21 and 29 does not correspond to the other certain dottings by the carver and that Jansson’s reservations concerning the dotting of these two runes is justified, while simultaneously electing to read rune 21 as a dotted rune. Like Jansson (1957:75), he notes that rune 15 has a clear depression between the mainstave and branch, and he is initially sceptical that this could be natural. He nonetheless finally decides to consider the rune as undotted (cf. my reading in the catalogue, no 40). Hultgård (1988:138) is right when he states of Lindquist’s reading: “In some cases, Lindquist’s ultimate identification of a runic sign must largely be due to his interpretation of the text.”¹⁵⁴

I present an overview below (Table 6) of Lindquist’s many suggestions for interpretation. The content is taken from the review by Westlund (p. 30 f.), although it has been reorganised to make the material clearer. I have also checked all the information in the table against Lindquist’s writings, corrected some ambiguities and added a few further interpretations (some of which were missing in the review and others which Lindquist himself abandoned but which were later accepted by other scholars).

¹⁵⁴ “I några fall måste den vidare bestämningen av ett runtecken, enligt Lindquist, ytterst grundas på tolkningen av texten.”

Table 6. Lindquist's proposals for interpretation of the Kvinneby plate.

Runes 1–22: h̄irkirkui^umsutirkup̄ir birk bufi mer			
<i>Hær'k</i> <i>Ek hæR</i>	(1) <i>Erku imissu</i> (2) <i>Erku – vīss em –</i> (3) <i>ī yrki (h)ēms</i> (4) <i>ī yrki Ōms</i> (5) <i>ī yrki ōms</i> (6) <i>– ī yrki vīss em –</i> (7) <i>ī yrki – vīss em</i> (8) <i>ī yrki vīss em</i>	<i>undirguð,</i>	<i>þī er berg'k Bōfi mæR.</i>
I sing praises/ praise ¹⁵⁵	(1) Erka, the multifaceted (2) Erka – I am knowledgeable – (3) in a poem, the human world's (4) in Om's (= Odin's) poetry (5) in a loud poem (6) – I am knowledgeable in poetry – (7) in a poem – I am knowledgeable – (8) – in the work (of cultivating) I am knowledgeable – ¹⁵⁶	the god below, ¹⁵⁷	because I, Bove, save myself (= have my refuge). ¹⁵⁸
Runes 23–56: fult ihup̄ is þer uis in braltilu fran bufa			
<i>Fuld, ihūþ</i> <i>es þæR vīss!</i>	(1) <i>(H)inn brā all</i> (2) <i>En brā(a) all</i> (3) <i>Ēnb(u)rr/Ēnn b(u)rr</i> (4) <i>En brā</i>	<i>tȳi</i> <i>tȳi</i> <i>(h)aldi/ælti</i> <i>(h)aldi/ælti</i>	<i>illu frān Bōfa</i>
Earth, to you is (= you have) the con- sideration of a wise one (for me) ¹⁵⁹	(1) the one (which lightning) flashes/ generates, (2) and the generators of the lightning, (3) the only son (of Earth), (4) and the lightning (Lindquist abandoned this fourth suggestion for metrical reasons although it was accepted by Westlund) ¹⁶⁰	may help may help may hold/hunt may hold/hunt ¹⁶¹	Bove from evil. Bove from evil. evil from Bove. evil from Bove. ¹⁶²
Runes 57–91: þor keti hans mir þem hamri s am hyr hafikam			
<i>Þörr gæti hans mer þēm hamri, es Ām hyrr</i>	(1) <i>hafiga Ām.</i> (2) <i>Haf ī gā, Ām!</i> (3) <i>Haf inka, Ām!</i> (Lindquist abandoned his third suggestion for metrical reasons although it was accepted by Louis-Jensen)		

¹⁵⁵ 'Jag lovsjunger/lovprisar'¹⁵⁶ '(1) Erka, den månskiftande / (2) Erka – kunnig är jag – / (3) i en dikt, människovärldens / (4) i Oms (= Odens) poesi / (5) i en ljudlig dikt / (6) – i diktning är jag kunnig – / (7) i en dikt – jag är kunnig – / (8) – i (odlar)yrket är jag kunnig –'¹⁵⁷ 'guden inunder'¹⁵⁸ 'för det att jag, Bove, bärgar mig (= har min bärgning)'¹⁵⁹ 'Jord, åt dig är (= du har) en kunnigs omtanke (om mig)'¹⁶⁰ '(1) Den (som ljungeld) blixtrar/alstrar, / (2) Och blixternas alstrare, / (3) Den ende sonen (till Jord), / (4) Och blixten'¹⁶¹ 'hjalpe / hjälpe / hälle/jage / hälle/jage'¹⁶² 'Bove från ont. / Bove från ont. / ont från Bove. / ont från Bove.'

May Thor preserve him with the hammer which strikes Åm (= demon of shingles) ¹⁶³	(1) the heavy (= wound-swelling) Åm. (2) Go into the sea, Åm! (3) Have distress, Åm! ¹⁶⁴
Runes 92–143: fly fran ilu it fer eki af bufa kuþ iru untir hanum auk yfir hanum	
<i>Flý, frān illvætt! FæR ækki af Bōfa.</i>	<i>Guþ eru undir auk yfir hānum.</i>
Flee, foul creature of bad luck! (You) get nothing from Bove. ¹⁶⁵	Gods are under him and over him. ¹⁶⁶

Westlund's critique of Lindquist's interpretations is confined to one and a half pages of text (1989:42 f.) and can be characterised as fairly superficial. He concedes (p. 42) that Lindquist's work "testifies to extensive reading and deep familiarity with Old Norse literary sources. The arguments advanced never show any formal errors; the conclusions drawn inevitably rest on the author's thorough knowledge."¹⁶⁷ Westlund does not challenge Lindquist's individual discussions of various words but simply notes that his interpretations in many cases do not convince. He is particularly sceptical of the names in the interpretations (**Erka*, **Fold*, **ÅMR*), as these are not attested anywhere else and since he regards Lindquist's support for them as weak. Westlund also reveals himself to be particularly sceptical of the words **undirguþ* 'the god below', **thūþ* 'consideration', *hyrr* (from posited **hyria* 'strike') and *frān* 'foul'. He further criticises the readings *hær*'k 'I praise' and *berg*'k 'I save' for their lack of verb endings and for their weak support in the runic material. He rightfully questions Lindquist's suggestion of reading the word *burr* 'son' from the sequence **br** (rr. 41–42) as well as his assumption of an archaic vocative case in the word *illvætt* 'evil creature (wight)'. Westlund (p. 51) thus rejects all of these proposals and considers that Lindquist's reading and interpretation of the entire introductory section "is completely erroneous".¹⁶⁸

Westlund (1989:50) has further noted that Lindquist's perception of paganism is strongly influenced by a Christian concept of the world, with the inscription representing for him a prayer expressing the poet's humility and piety. Westlund instead believes that the Kvinneby plate "has had a completely magical function".¹⁶⁹

Hultgård's review (1988) of Lindquist's work is thorough and considered, containing many interesting observations and important notes. Not only

¹⁶³ 'Tor bevare honom med den hammare som slår Åm (= bältrosens demon)'

¹⁶⁴ '(1) den tunge (= sårsvällande) Åm. / (2) Gå i havet, Åm! / (3) Hav bedrövelse, Åm!'

¹⁶⁵ 'Fly, fula olycksvätte! (Du) får intet av Bove.'

¹⁶⁶ 'Gudar är under honom och över honom.'

¹⁶⁷ "vittnar om vid beläsenhet och djup förtrogenhet med fornnordiska litterära källor. De förda resonemangen uppvisar aldrig några formella felaktigheter; dragna slutsatser vilar alltid på författarens grundliga lärdom."

¹⁶⁸ "är alltigenom förfelade"

¹⁶⁹ "har haft helt och hållet magisk funktion"

does he discuss Lindquist's arguments based on the history of religion but also his methodology and linguistic results. He thus comments on the term 'transcription', criticising its widespread runological use as a synonym for 'transliteration'. Although the names **Fold* and **Āmr* occasion some doubts, he does not, like Westlund, unequivocally reject them, considering the suggestions tempting. He prefers to interpret (p. 140 f.) the name *Āmr* as 'the dark one, the black one', which was one of Lindquist's earlier proposals:

This alternative would accord better with the mythology which surrounds Thor in the Eddic and skaldic poetry. 'The dark one' would then represent the evil powers and the amulet would have an application wider than that of being a protective formula intended for only one kind of illness.¹⁷⁰

Hultgård is inclined to see the Kvinneby plate as an amulet of a more general character. He further wishes an explanation of what Lindquist meant by the phrase 'because I, Bove, save myself' and suggests (p. 141) his own reading and interpretation of this part of the inscription, analysing **ir bir k bufi mer** as *er ber'k Bōfi mæR* with a locative or sociative dative, 'which I, Bove, carry on myself (or with me)'.¹⁷¹ He prefers to understand the preceding word *undirgub* as "that which is in a god's power"¹⁷² and suggests that this word could correspond to our terms 'amulet, symbol'. Hultgård observes the strangeness in the carver changing from the I-form in the beginning to the third person in the middle section and suggests connecting this with the change in relative pronoun from *er* in the introduction to *es* in the middle section.

Lindquist's overall conception of the inscription as a prayer to the earth goddess *Fold* and the sky god *Þōrr* is obviously based entirely on the occurrence of the name *Fold* in the inscription as well as his ideas about the Indo-European legacy of the cult of the divine pair. Hultgård (p. 142) is therefore very cautious in commenting on this view; he nonetheless observes that other scholars hold different ideas about the Indo-European pantheon (e.g. Georges Dumézil).

Hultgård (1988:142) regrets the lack of investigation of the significance of the fish depiction and is certain that this is not purely ornamental but serves to "emphasise the message in the runic text".¹⁷³ He further suggests that the fish depiction might be the symbol of a divinity "who has the power to help and heal Bove, a pictorial invocation"¹⁷⁴ and that it might allude to a ritual act which preceded the carving and the wearing of the amulet. Hultgård's observation

¹⁷⁰ "Detta alternativ skulle passa bättre in i den mytologi som edda- och skaldediktningen omger Tor med. 'Den mörke' skulle då representera de onda makterna och amuletten skulle få en vidare syftning än att vara en skyddsformel avsedd bara för en sorts sjukdom."

¹⁷¹ "som jag Bove bär på mig (alt. med mig)"

¹⁷² "det som ligger under en gudoms makt"

¹⁷³ "understryka budskapet i runtexten"

¹⁷⁴ "som har makt att hjälpa och hela Bove, en åkallan i bild"

that the creator of the Kvinneby plate may have been influenced by “the emerging Christianity”¹⁷⁵ is appealing, as is the suggestion that this could have been reflected in the verb *gæta* ‘preserve, protect’ (which otherwise usually occurs in Christian runic texts) and the desire to be protected against evil (which is reminiscent of The Lord’s Prayer and is attested in Christian runic inscriptions in Latin). The picture of the fish may according to Hultgård (ibid.) also be linked to Christian influence. Similarly appealing is his assumption that the phrase ‘Gods are under him and above him’ need not be taken literally (as by Lindquist when he here identifies the sky god Thor and the earth goddess Fold) but can alternatively be regarded as a symbolic expression that “Bove feels surrounded and protected by the divine powers”.¹⁷⁶

Grønvik’s (1992:73–75) critique of Lindquist coincides with Westlund’s as regards the names **Erka* and **Fold*, but in contrast to Westlund’s general scepticism, Grønvik (p. 73) specifically shows that Lindquist’s reconstruction of the Proto-Germanic form of the name (**arjakōn*) is problematic. He is also dubious of the OSw. verb **hærja* ‘praise’, reconstructed by Lindquist with the help of Gothic *hazjan* and OEng. *herian*. Grønvik is also unconvinced that the expression *(h)ēms undirgub* could mean ‘the goddess under the world’. He also comments on Lindquist’s impossible double-reading of a number of bind-runes in the opening (p. 74) as well as the reading *ēnburr* of the runic sequence **inbr** (p. 75). Finally, he criticises the suggestion of interpreting the runic sequence **in bra_alti_ilu fran bufa** as *en brā ælti illu frān Bōfa* ‘And lightning may drive evil from Bove’. He affirms (ibid.) that the verb OWS *elta* ‘hunt, pursue’ governs the accusative and cannot take objects in the dative (*illu*); there is moreover a lack of parallels to the concept of lightning being able to hunt evil (or keep it away). Lindquist had in fact abandoned this interpretation, presumably for metrical reasons (see Lindquist 1987:35, fn. 1, editor’s note), and Grønvik’s criticism is perhaps due to Westlund’s acceptance of this particular suggestion.

Lindquist’s proposals for interpretation have thus already been discussed and criticised, but the focus has primarily been on his results rather than his approach. I wish nonetheless to demonstrate how other texts influenced him and thereby draw attention to his interpretational methodology.

The bind-runes of the introduction are separated by Lindquist into individual components, resulting in one section of his interpretation in the word **erka*, which he interprets as **Erka*, a name for the Earth goddess. Later, in row 2 of the inscription, he interprets the runic sequence **fult** (rr. 23–26) as another feminine theonym, *Fold* f. ‘Earth’. The name **Erka* is not attested in any Scandinavian source, but Lindquist refers to a well-known Anglo-Saxon spell for the fertility of the earth, dated to around the eleventh century. It contains the following verse (quoted from Grendon 1909:175 f.):

¹⁷⁵ “den framträngande kristendomen”

¹⁷⁶ “Bove känner sig omgiven och skyddad av de gudomliga makterna”

*Erce, erce, erce, Eorþan mōdor,
geunne þē sē alwalda, ēce drihten
æcera wexendra and wrīdendra,
æcniendra and elniendra ...*

Erce, erce, erce, mother of Earth,
May the Almighty, the eternal Lord, grant you
Fields flourishing and bountiful,
Fruitful and sustaining ...

Lindquist seeks support in this verse for his suggestion that **Erka* is a designation of the goddess Earth. The introductory *Erce, erce, erce* in this spell has however been interpreted as a “gibberish formula” by other scholars (Grendon 1909:155). It shows similarities with two further Anglo-Saxon spells which have the similar words *acræ*, *ærcræ*, *ærnem*: these were probably also meaningless, or had lost any meaning they may originally have had (see Grendon 1909:220, n. 52). Lindquist attempts to explain the word as a contraction of **Erece*, which would correspond to the Old High German feminine name *Erica* <**Arjakōn*. I do not intend here to comment on this reconstruction as Grønvik (1992:73) has already done so, but question whether this word is in fact of Germanic origin since the entire Old English text and the ritual behind it seem to have their roots in Latin tradition (cf. Jolly & al. 2002: 35, 47).¹⁷⁷

Later in the same spell, a verse (cited from Grendon 1909:176 f.) is addressed to *folde* ‘earth’:

*Hāl wes þū, folde, fīra mōdor,
beo þū grōwende on godes fæþme,
fōdre gefylled fīrum tō nytte.*

All hail, Earth, mother of men!
Be fruitful in God’s embracing arm,
Filled with food for the needs of men.

Lindquist was apparently inspired by this fertility formula in the process of his analysis, since his interpretation of the Kvinneby inscription contains both the names *Fold* and **Erka*, which can hardly be purely coincidental. The word OWS *fold* occurs, according to Lindquist, as a name in *Sigrdrífumál* 5: *Heilir æsir! Heilar ásynjur! Heil sjá in fiqlnýta fold!*, ‘Hail to the Æsir gods! Hail to

¹⁷⁷ Jolly (in Jolly & al. 2002:35) writes: “The oft-cited Latin appeal to Mother Earth to bless the earth and an adjuration of herbs to bring out their healing powers is found in a twelfth-century English manuscript [...]. However, this is a copy of a classical text found in one line of the herbal tradition, and hence is not the product of Germanic paganism surviving into the high Middle Ages. [p. 47]: Despite earlier attempts to reconstruct a Germanic pagan origin for this ceremony, its components can be clearly traced to a Latin literate tradition closely allied with liturgical practice. Far from being evidence of the retention of paganism, this ceremony is evidence of the Christianizing of rural practice.”

the Æsir goddesses. Hail to the bounteous earth!’, although Westlund (1989:34, fn. 9) observes that “nothing forces the conclusion that *fold* is a personal name in the verse cited”.¹⁷⁸

Lindquist thus imagines that the poet Bove offers a prayer to the earth goddess, whom he calls by several names: *Fold*, **Erka* and **undirguð* ‘the god below the human world’, but also to the sky god *Pōrr*, which would accord with the concept of an Indo-European cult of a divine couple comprising a sky god and earth goddess. It is interesting to observe that Lindquist presumes the inscription is poetic; he therefore rejects a number of interpretations which are perhaps more convincing than those he finally selects but which do not fit the supposed metre of the poem. Lindquist certainly finds *Fold* problematic as it clashes with the rhythm of the poem, although he does not question the interpretation itself.

Two further texts which influenced Lindquist’s interpretation of the Kvinneby inscription are Sigtuna plate 1 and the Canterbury formula (E DR419). Lindquist refers on occasion to his interpretation of the Sigtuna inscription when seeking support for the idea that the vocative case continued to exist into the Viking Age, and sporadically seeks to align the contents of the Kvinneby inscription with these two other texts.

Lindquist (1987:33) attempts to explain the endingless forms of address of **Āmr* (the name of a demon of shingles, not attested earlier) and *illvættr* f. ‘evil creature’ by an ancient vocative, which according to him could have been preserved in an archaic poetic incantation. He refers to Sigtuna plate 1, in which he twice identifies the endingless form *ulf* in the same position. My reading and interpretation of the Sigtuna plate nonetheless show that only one of the forms lacks an ending, and that the explanation for that might be much simpler than assuming a relic of the vocative case (section 3.2.4.4).

Lindquist also compares the phrase in the Kvinneby inscription **fly fran iluit** with those in the Canterbury formula (‘Gyrill’s wound-tap, you go now!’) and Sigtuna plate 1 (‘Lord of trolls, you flee now!’). In this phrase he thus sees an address to a demon analogous with the parallel texts, for which reason he dismisses (p. 29) the otherwise obvious interpretation of **fran** as prep. ‘from’. In this way he distinguishes (pp. 29–32) adj. *frän/från* ‘detestable, repellent’ and the interpretation ‘Flee, you detestable old troll woman!’ or ‘Flee, foul creature of bad luck!’¹⁷⁹

Lindquist’s interpretation of the runes **hʏr** (rr. 82–84) as *hʏrr*, 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. of the verb corresponding to Old Icelandic *hyria* ‘knock, beat’ is also problematic. The word should have been carved with the *reið*-rune rather than the yew-rune, as is usually the case with the assimilation /rr/ > /rʀ/ (Larsson 2002: 40). This all but impossible interpretation has however been accepted by both Grønvik and Louis-Jensen.

¹⁷⁸ “intet tvingar till uppfattningen av *fold* som egennamn i den anförda strofen”

¹⁷⁹ “Fly, du vedervärdiga tursakärring!” / “Fly, fula olycksvätte!”

3.3.2.3 Börje Westlund's interpretation from 1989

Westlund's reading and analysis is contained to five and a half pages of text (pp. 44–49) and could rightfully be called the hitherto shortest attempt at interpretation. Westlund excludes two of Lindquist's dotted runes, namely r. 21 i and 83 u. He normalises the inscription to runic Swedish and translates it as follows (p. 43):

Hæ̃r rīsti ek þæ̃r berg, Bōfi, ... þæ̃r er vīss. En brā (h)aldi illu frān Bōfa. Þōrr gæti hans mer þēm hamri ... Flý frān illvætt! Fæ̃r ækki af Bōfa. Guð eru undir hānum auk yfir hānum.

Here may I carve (or: I carved) protection for you, Bove, with ... is safe for you (= you can rely on). And may the lightning keep evil (away) from Bove. May Thor protect him with the hammer ... Flee from the evil creature! It(?) gets nothing from Bove. Gods are under him and over him.¹⁸⁰

Westlund proposes a radical solution to the introductory bind-runes, namely that they have non-graphematic branches. He thus reads them as simple runes, and the sequence read by Lindquist as *hīrkirkuiṡutiṡkūpīr* becomes *hīristikpīr*. He believes (p. 44) that “a fully comprehensible meaning is achieved if one ignores certain branches and considers all the runes as simple from a functional point of view. Excess branches should then be regarded as having been added for the purpose of decoration (or obscurity).”¹⁸¹ Although support for his suggestion is adduced (p. 46) in Russian plates from Rjurikovo Gorodišče by Novgorod Velikij (Gorodišče plates 1 and 2), Westlund nonetheless failed to convince his peers. His interpretation is reproduced in SRD but has not been accepted by later scholars working on the inscription. Grønvik (1992:75) criticises Westlund for failing to explain his reading of rune 1 as *h* (rather than *k* or *ṛ*) and rune 8 as *k* (rather than *ṛ*). Grønvik rightly believes that Westlund's argument is weak: an interpretation cannot be based on its achieving a “fully comprehensible meaning” in the first row, especially in view of the fact that the author is unsuccessful in the two subsequent rows. Jonna Louis-Jensen (2006:266) is sceptical of Westlund's interpretation for the same reason. I might add that Elena Mel'nikova's interpretation of Gorodišče plates 1 and 2, which Westlund refers to as “important support”¹⁸² for his interpretation, is highly problematic (see section 7.2.1.2). This in its turn makes Westlund's suggestion even harder to accept. I will nevertheless argue in its favour later in the text.

Westlund leaves row 2 partly uninterpreted and row 3, translated as ‘is safe for you’, lacks a proper connection with the preceding or following lines. There

¹⁸⁰ “Här må jag rista (eller: ristade jag) skydd åt dig, Bove, med ... är säker för dig (= du kan lita på). Och blixten hålle ont (borta) från Bove. Tor skydde honom med den hammare ... Fly från det onda väsendet! Det(?) får intet av Bove. Gudar är under honom och över honom.”

¹⁸¹ “uppnås fullt begriplig mening, om man bortser från vissa bistavar och betraktar samtliga runor som enkla från funktionell synpunkt. Övertaliga bistavar skall då uppfattas såsom tillagda i dekorativt (eller fördunklande) syfte.”

¹⁸² “ett viktigt stöd”

are no good parallels to the double-reading of two runes in line 3 **per** (rr. 33–35) to give **er** (3 pers. sg. pres. of the verb *vera* ‘to be’). The interpretation of *brā* as ‘lightning’ is borrowed from Lindquist, as is the verb (*h*)*alda* ‘to hold’ and its continuation ‘evil (away) from Bove. May Thor protect him with the hammer’. No suggested interpretation is offered of the rest of row 5 and the beginning of row 6. Westlund is however more successful with the runic sequence **flyfraniluit** (rr. 92–103), which he interprets as ‘Flee from the evil creature!’ with the word *illvætt* f. in dat. sg., in this way avoiding the problems created by an endingless form of *illvætt*, which Lindquist attempts to explain as an archaic vocative. The following sentence causes him problems, however, as ‘(It?) gets nothing from Bove’ lacks a subject. The interpretation of the final sentence is borrowed by Westlund from Lindquist (or ultimately from Nilsson 1976).

Westlund believes that Bove is the owner of the amulet and the inscription is directed against an evil creature (an *illvætt* or evil wight); he says nothing however about the connection of the fish with the inscription. He further believes that the function of the inscription was magical but that this does not exclude Bove himself from being Christian. The language of the inscription is poetic, according to Westlund, although he does not set it out as verse.

3.3.2.4 Ottar Grønvik’s interpretation from 1992

Grønvik (1992:71–85) not only discusses Lindquist’s interpretation of side A but puts forward his own. He regards the introductory runes as true bind-runes: **hīrkīurkimsutīrkūpīrbirk**, rejecting (p. 75) Westlund’s suggestion of simple runes with ornamental branches. Nor does he follow (p. 72) Westlund’s reading of runes 21 and 83, but instead chooses, like Lindquist, to regard these as dotted. He normalises (p. 81) the inscription into Old West Scandinavian, believing that this is a better-established norm:

*Hér-k í yrki Íms undir guði,
er ber’k Bófi mér *fýld í húð,
es þér vís’s, en brá alt illu frá Bófa:
þórr gæti hans med þeim hamri
es Ám hyrr, hōfuga Ám!
Flý frá, illvætt(r)!
Ferr ekki af Bófa;
guð eru undir hōnum ok yfir hōnum*

In here, under Im’s god, I ‘compose’ (a prayer),
because I, Bove, carry something foul in my skin
which is known to you, who everywhere took evil away from Bove:
May Thor guard him with the hammer

which he strikes Ám with, the unhappy Ám!
 Flee away from here, evil creature!
 Concerns go away from Bove,
 gods are under him and over him.¹⁸³

The inscription is, according to Grønvik (p. 81 f.), Bove's personal prayer to the god Thor, who is named once as *Íms guð* and once as *Þórr*. It is unclear who *Ímr* might be, perhaps a mythic forefather of Bove or even the giant *Ímr*, who is mentioned once in *Vafþrúðnismál* 5. Grønvik comments (p. 76) of this giant that the expression 'under the god of the giant Im' can only be understood if one assumes the existence of giants who worship divinities. Grønvik (p. 77) here refers to Snorri's tale of several groups of giants with different characteristics; one of the groups is depicted as comprising farmers with great riches and numbers of cattle, who had beautiful daughters whom the gods wanted to marry. Grønvik (p. 77) summarises Snorri's story as follows: "One might then therefore believe that these giants themselves worship gods and perhaps were originally farmer chieftains acting as priests."¹⁸⁴

Bove is thus the poet and the owner of the amulet. He has a skin disease, which Grønvik suggests could be some kind of pox. *Ámr* is the name of a demon or giant who sends the pox to people (p. 78); he is also the one called *illvætt(r)* (p. 79). The inscriptional incantation is not a form of primitive magic, according to Grønvik (p. 81), but a religious prayer "pronounced by a deeply anxious pagan".¹⁸⁵

The beginning of the inscription, as interpreted by Grønvik, is problematic. In the first place it is difficult to accept that rune 1 (✱) consists of the four runes **h**, **r**, **k** and **i**. I am particularly sceptical of the **i**-rune here. Why would the carver conceal this in the mainstave of the bind-rune while using other freestanding **i**-runes in the same introduction? It is also uncertain whether the **k**-rune could represent the enclitic form of the personal pronoun 'I', since in principle this pronoun is used enclitically only after finite verb forms in runic inscriptions.¹⁸⁶ Also strange is the placement of the preposition *í* 'inside', which belongs with the adv. *hér* 'here', after the personal pronoun. It is moreover unexpected for *hér* to be spelt with an unetymological **r**. Grønvik similarly accepts Lindquist's dubious suggestion of reading the sequence **hyr** (rr. 82–84) as *hyrr*. The interpretation of **fer** (rr. 104–106) as *ferr* is problematic for the same reason.

¹⁸³ "Her inne, under Ims gud, 'dikter' jeg (en bønn), / fordi jeg Bove bærer noe ufyselig i huden / som er kjent for deg, som overalt tok ondt bort fra Bove: / Tor vokte ham med den hammer / som han slår Ám med, den leie Ám! / Flykt vekk herfra, ill-vætte! / Bekymringene farer bort fra Bove, / guder er under ham og over ham."

¹⁸⁴ "Man må vel derfor tro at disse jotner selv dyrker guder og kanskje opprinnelig var bondehøvdinge med prestefunksjoner."

¹⁸⁵ "fremsagt av en from hedning i dyp angst"

¹⁸⁶ The example *nu'k* on the Rök stone (Ög 136) cannot be regarded as certain. There are examples of the pers. pron. *ek* being used enclitically after personal names (Ög 165), but we have no certain examples of their being used after adverbs.

It would also be surprising for the carver to employ three different particles (*er*, *es* and *en*) in the same sentence: *er ber'k Bófi mér *fýld í húð, es þér vís's, en brá alt illu frá Bófa*. Grønvik (p. 78) does note that the particles *es* and *er* have different functions; thus *es* is a relative pronoun while *er* is a causal conjunction. The relative pronoun *en* refers, according to Grønvik, back to *þér*. He interprets the formulation ‘something foul in the skin’ **fýld í húð* as pox. The word **fýld* is not attested in dictionaries; it is said to have been created as an *ipō*-derivation of the OWS adj. *fúll* ‘rotten, stinking’ (Fritzner)¹⁸⁷ and to correspond to OEng. *fȳlð* f. ‘dirt, impurity’.

It is moreover problematic to interpret **iluít** (line 6) as *illvættr* in the vocative case. Grønvik (p. 79) writes that “a corresponding vocative form of a masculine *i*-stem is attested in Gothic [...]. It may be preserved here in a traditional exhortative formula.”¹⁸⁸ In the first place, the OES word *vættr* is a feminine *i*-stem, and in the second, it seems far-fetched to refer to vocative forms in Gothic, a language which is considerably older than that of the Kvinneby inscription.

Grønvik does not comment on the picture of the fish. He labels the style of the inscription Formal Prose.

3.3.2.5 Jonna Louis-Jensen’s interpretation from 2001

Louis-Jensen published her interpretation in 2001. Five years later the same interpretation was reproduced in a publication in celebration of the author’s 70th birthday (Louis-Jensen 2006 [2001]): the article was printed unchanged but was followed by a postscript where the author responded to the critiques of McKinnell & al. (2004) and McKinnell (2005). The same interpretation is also printed in Louis-Jensen 2005.

Louis-Jensen claims to be following Grønvik’s reading of the runes (to be specific, it is Lindquist’s reading, which Grønvik adopted). She suggests a completely new interpretation of the first three lines of the inscription, however, normalising (2006:267) the inscription into runic Swedish and translating as follows:

*H(æ)R'k ī kūri
(ī)ms undir guþi,
(æ)RR ber'k Būfi
mæR fūlt ī hūþ –
es þæR vīs in brā –
<h>alt illu frān Būfa!
Þōrr gæti hans
mēr þæm hamri
(e)s Ām hyRR!*

¹⁸⁷ ‘raaden, stinkende’

¹⁸⁸ “En tilsvarende vokativform av en maskulin *i*-stamme er belagt i gotisk [...]. Her kan den være bevart i en tradisjonell meningsformel.”

*Haf ekka, Āmr!
 Flý frān, illvētt!
 Færr ækki af Būfa;
 guþ eru undir hānum
 auk yfir hānum.*

I curl up in here
 under the god of soot,
 a wound I carry, Bove,
 festering in my skin –
 you know where the glistening one is –
 keep the evil away from Bove!
 May Thor protect him
 with the hammer
 which he strikes Āmr with!
 Have (may you have) the affliction, Āmr!
 Flee away, evil creature!
 The affliction leaves Bove,
 there are gods under him
 and over him.¹⁸⁹

Bove is the wearer of the amulet according to this interpretation. He suffers from an *ærr fūlt* ‘badly healed wound’, i.e. a skin disorder of some kind, and as a patient undergoes a magical cure. One of the steps in this cure consists of the patient sitting curled up in a fireplace and being covered with soot. The fireplace is connected with house wights in Scandinavian folk belief, and soot is sometimes used in later Scandinavian folk medicine to treat skin diseases. The inscription’s ‘gods under him and over him’ may then be house wights and fireplace wights. The author also identifies a wight in the formulation *īms guþ* ‘god of the soot’. As well as wights, the inscription mentions the god Thor and the giant Āmr, who is later identified as the demon of disease responsible for Bove’s illness. Louis-Jensen (p. 272) states of her method of interpretation that she recognises the inscription’s genre and frames of reference in the inscription on the Sigtuna plate as well as the Canterbury formula: “It is clearly the same conceptual world which lies behind the Kvinneby amulet’s ‘Flee away, evil creature’, and in my opinion the entire Kvinneby amulet should be interpreted within this framework of understanding.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ “Heri kryber jeg sammen / under sodens gud, / et ar (sår) bærer jeg, Bove, / betændt i min hud – / du ved hvor den glinsende er – / hold det onde væk fra Bove! / Tor beskytte ham / med den hammer / som han slår Āmr med! / Hav (gid du må have) bekymringen, Āmr! / Fly bort, onde væsen! / Bekymringen forlader Bove, / der er guder under ham / og over ham.”

¹⁹⁰ “Det er tydeligvis samme forestillingsverden der ligger bag ved Kvinneby-amulettens ‘Fly frān, illvētt’, og efter min opfattelse bør hele Kvinneby-amuletten tolkes inden for denne forståelsesramme.”

Her interpretation shares a number of problems with the previous ones. Thus we find runic \mathfrak{K} read as four runes (**h**, **r**, **k** and **i**), vocative case for the word *illvætr* f. ‘evil creature’ as well as unetymological **r**-runes in *hæR*, *hyRR* and *fæRR*. There are also new difficulties. The author is forced to interpret **ir** (line 1) as the word *æRR* ‘wound’ with unetymological **r**, although it should be noted that she herself is aware of the problem. She also comments that it is difficult to explain why the carver would once spell the word *ekki* ‘affliction, concern’ with the **e**-rune (**eki** rr. 107–109) and elsewhere with the **i**-rune (**ika** rr. 88–90), although this is no great problem. The interpretation *Haf ekka, Åm!*, which Louis-Jensen borrows from Lindquist, is also heavily influenced by the Sigtuna plate.

The suggestion of interpreting *in brā* as ‘the glistening, the glittering’ in weak feminine form (since the appellation refers to *illvætr* f.) is interesting. The adjective **brār*, while not attested in dictionaries, is reconstructed by Louis-Jensen (2006:276 f.) with the help of toponyms and hydronyms. The sentence *es þæR vīs in brā* thus means ‘the glistening is known to you’, in reference to a demon in the shape of a snake responsible for Bove’s illness; it is moreover *īms guþ* ‘the god of soot’ who knows where the demon can be found. The sentence ‘keep the evil away from Bove!’ is identified by Louis-Jensen as being directed not at Thor but at a ‘fireplace wight’. She interprets gen. *īms* as soot rather than, like Grønvik, a form of the name *Īmr*.

The depiction of the fish, according to Louis-Jensen (2001:281), symbolises the *fish of life*, occurring in Irish folk belief as the salmon of life, “the soul materialised in the form of a fish”,¹⁹¹ which also has parallels in Scandinavian folk belief. She believes the inscription to be metrical.

3.3.2.6 McKinnell & al.’s understanding of the inscription from 2004

The authors present Louis-Jensen’s normalisation and translate her interpretation into English (2004:65) as well as commenting on some of the words and presenting their own suggestions of how these should be understood. The expression *īms undir guþi* cannot in their opinion (p. 66) be interpreted as ‘under the god of soot’, since it is the name of the giant *Īmr* in *Vafþrúðnismál* 5 and is moreover almost synonymous with the name *Āmr*. To resolve this problem, they suggest (p. 66) that the word *undirguð* can mean ‘demon’ and that the first sentence may be interpreted as ‘In here I cower with the demon of Īmr.’ They further prefer to understand *in brā* ‘the glistening one’ as a circumlocution for Thor’s hammer, which is associated with lightning; and they interpret *ekki* as ‘convulsive sobbing’ rather than ‘affliction’. Louis-Jensen (2006:283) refutes these criticisms and convincingly defends her interpretation of these sections.

¹⁹¹ “den i fiskform materialiserade själen”

3.3.2.7 John McKinnell's understanding of the inscription 2005

John McKinnell (2005:160–162) bases his understanding of the Kvinneby inscription on the interpretation by Louis-Jensen (with some features taken from Grønvik). He nonetheless changes the meaning of some words and sees the amulet as a form of protection for a woman in childbirth rather than as an incantation against a demon of skin disease. No normalisation is provided but his translation is as follows (p. 161):

Here I crouch under (the control of) the 'god' of Ímr (the demon), while I, Búfi, keep myself fully inside the skin (i.e. before I am born). The glittering thing (= lightning, Þórr's hammer?) is known to you – keep harm from Búfi! May Þórr guard him with the hammer with which he strikes Ámr (= Ímr)! May you have the sobbing, Ámr! Be gone, evil creature! The sobbing leaves Búfi, there are gods below him and above him.

McKinnell suggests (p. 161) that the inscription contains the names *Ímr* and *Ámr*, but he believes that these are two similar appellations for the same demon: *Ímr* 'the Sooty one' or *Ámr* 'the Dark one'. McKinnell (p. 160) looks for a connection between the *Bove* named in the inscription and the son of Rind and Odin, whom Saxo Grammaticus calls *Bous*. He believes that there is a connection between Saxo's tale of Rind and her son *Bous* and a Danish folk tradition at the birth of a child which is recounted by a Danish Franciscan monk called Petrus around 1260. This tradition involves women present at a birth dancing indecently with a straw figure called *bovi*. McKinnell (p. 161) thus wants to consider the inscription on the Kvinneby plate in this context of childbirth:

It is possible that Saxo, Brother Peter and the Kvinneby amulet all used the same name in different contexts by coincidence, but all three are from the same area; at least two of them focus on childbirth; and two involve female lasciviousness. *Bous/Bovi* was probably a Danish/Swedish nickname for *Váli*, and there was a folk ritual, associated with childbirth, which may allude to the myth of Óðinn and Rindr and the birth of *Váli*.

McKinnell's revision of Louis-Jensen's interpretation does not however support his hypothesis. He, like McKinnell & al. 2004, interprets the word *ekki* as 'convulsive sobbing', which is a contemporary sense of the word in Modern Icelandic, a fact already pointed out by Louis-Jensen (2006:283). She further notes (p. 284) that the first sentence 'while I, Búfi, keep myself fully inside the skin (i.e. before I am born)' strains linguistic credibility.

3.3.2.8 Mindy MacLeod & Bernard Mees' understanding of the inscription (2006)

MacLeod and Mees (2006:28) conflated the interpretations of Westlund (1989) and Nilsson (1976). One word (*īhūð*) was also taken from Lindquist's interpretation although a question mark was appended to it.

*Hæ̃r rīsti ek þæ̃r berg,
 Bōfi. Mæ̃r fullty! Īhūð (?) es þæ̃r vīss.
 En brā haldi illu frān Bōfa.
 Þōrr gæti hans með þēm hamri sem ur hafī kam.
 Fl̃y frān illvētt! Fæ̃r ekki af Bōfa.
 Guð eru undir hānum auk yfir hānum.*

Here I carved for you (runes of) help, Bofi.
 Help me! Knowledge (?) is certain for you.
 And may the lightning keep all evil away from Bofi.
 May Thor protect him with that hammer which came from out of the sea.
 Flee from evil! It (?) gets nothing from Bofi.
 The gods are under him and over him.

It is odd that the authors refer only to Westlund without naming Nilsson in their literature list despite using the interpretation *Mæ̃r fullty!* ‘Help me!’ from Nilsson 1976. They also reproduce Nilsson’s suggestion that the function of the amulet was to preserve its owner at sea.

3.3.2.9 Lasse Sonne’s reading from 2011

Lasse Sonne (2011:106–111) discusses the Kvinneby inscription in his dissertation and presents his own reading of the first line. He suggests (p. 109) that the first runic sign \mathfrak{K} can be separated into four runes: **k**, **n**, **a** and **r**. In this way he does not need to account for an **i**-rune concealed in the bind-rune as Lindquist, Grønvik and Louis-Jensen do. Sonne also reports (p. 111, fn. 2) that he has his own interpretation of the Kvinneby inscription which he intends to publish at a later date.

3.3.3 Conclusions and new questions

The inscription on the Kvinneby plate has attracted more interpretations than any other Viking-Age inscription on a portable object. The closest competitor is perhaps the Staraja Ladoga stick with its seven separate interpretations (see e.g. Kuz’menko 2011).

The overview above shows that an assured reading of runes 1–9 is lacking. Rows 2 and 3 are the most uncertain in the interpretation, causing the greatest disagreement among scholars. Varying interpretations of these rows have led to widely differing proposals as to what or whom the inscription is targeting. The end of row 6 and the beginning of row 7, particularly the word *illvætt*, are also problematic. Perceptions of the purpose of the inscription range from a curse on Bove to a protective invocation for him, when he is at sea or against demons of skin disease, for example, or to help him be born. Opinions on the conceptual world represented by the inscription also vary greatly. The connection between the text and the depiction of the fish requires clarification, and the

dating of the inscription to the beginning of the twelfth century deserves closer investigation. I aim to address these issues in the following.

Table 7. Earlier interpretations of the Kvinneby plate.

	Nilsson 1976	Lindquist 1987	Westlund 1989	Grønvik 1992	Louis-Jensen 2001 [2006]	McKinnell 2005
<i>Who is Bove?</i>	the owner of the amulet a fisherman	the oldest known poet in Swedish literature the owner of the amulet who worships the gods (in I-form)	the owner of the amulet	the one who 'composes' the prayer the owner of the amulet	the wearer of the amulet the patient	a child
<i>Which other names are mentioned/invoked?</i>	Thor gods	1) Erka – the earth goddess Fuld – 'Earth' 2) the giant Åm = 'shingles' – a name for a demon of disease 3) Ömr – 'the one who has a strong voice', a byname for Odin 4) Thor 5) the foul wight of bad luck 6) gods	Thor <i>illvætt</i> = the evil being gods	1) the god of the giant Im = Thor (or Im is an ancestor of Bove) 2) the giant Åm 3) <i>illvætt</i> = a demon of disease 4) gods	im's god = the soot wight 'the glittering one' (demon in the shape of a snake = <i>illvætt</i>) Thor the giant Åm the disease-causing <i>illvætt</i> gods	the demon Imr (= Åmr) Thor
<i>Which system of belief underlies the inscription?</i>	magic	paganism (the divine couple comprising the sky god and the earth goddess)	magic of Thor "Bove's possession and use of the amulet ... does [not] preclude his being baptised a Christian"	paganism: "a religious prayer, recited by a deeply anxious, pious pagan" (not primitive magic, there is some influence from Christianity)	magic	magic
<i>What is the purpose of the inscription?</i>	"The amulet is an invocation to the gods to protect Bove, especially while he is at sea"	invocation against the demon of shingles, Åm	invocation against an evil being	"He has a fatal disease (pox) and turns to his god with a prayer for help" The inscription is a personal prayer to the god Thor	"a step in a magical cure for a skin disease"	"a birthing charm"
<i>What is the function of the fish?</i>	the fins on the fisk are cryptic runes "the picture indicate[s] that Bove ... was a fisherman"	'the female salmon' refers to the exhortation to the demon to "go into the sea"	———	———	the salmon of life = the fish of life (Irish <i>bradán beatha</i> 'the soul materialised in the shape of a fish') "The purpose of the amulet is actually to save Bove from a deadly demon in the form of a snake, and what could be a more appropriate illustration than a living and breathing salmon?"	———
<i>Is the inscription poetic?</i>	yes	yes!	no	"formal prose with some suggestion of alliteration and rhythm"	no	———

3.3.4 New transliteration and interpretation

I investigated the inscription with a stereomicroscope on four occasions (November 2008, May 2010, November 2010 and January 2012). My transliteration follows underneath while my commentary is given in the catalogue (no 40).

According to my reading, the inscription contains one punctuation mark and 143 runes:

A: 1 × **hiristirkpirbirg**
 1 5 10 15
 2 **bufimirfultihu**
 20 25
 3 **risperuisinbral**
 30 35 40
 4 **tilufuranbufaporketih**
 45 50 55 60
 5 **ansmirpēmhamrisamhur**
 65 70 75 80

 B: 1 **hafikamflyfraniluit**
 85 90 95 100
 2 **ferekiafbufakupiru**
 105 110 115 120
 3 **untirhanumaukyfirhan**
 125 130 135 140
 4 **um**
 143

This reading diverges from earlier ones in that I identify r. 15 as **g** (not **k**), r. 21 **i** (not **e**), r. 29 **u** (not **y**), r. 30 **r** (not **þ**) and r. 83 **u** (not **y**). I also read the supposed opening bind-runes as unbound runes, with the exception of r. 8.

3.3.4.1 Runes 1–19 (rows A 1–2)

Line 1 contains what are generally presumed to be bind-runes, although Westlund (1989:44) nevertheless believes this to be an unnecessary assumption. It is important to observe in this context that no suggestion for resolution of these bind-runes has succeeded in producing a sequence which can be interpreted without the assumption of omitted vowel-runes. It is further of interest that the bind-runes occur only in the opening section and nowhere else in the inscription, even where they could have been useful, as for example row 4 on side A, where the carver forgot two runes, **r** and **u**, and was therefore forced to ‘squeeze’ them into the inscription (in the sequence **fran bufa**). The fact that the carver did not employ bind-runes in this correction might imply that the introductory bind-runes are no mere ordinary bind-runes. It is also interesting to note that there is ample space to continue the inscription on the reverse of the

plate – almost half of its surface is empty – and the bind-runes were thus not strictly necessary to allow room for more text.

One may further observe the great number of short, straight, descending or ascending lines in the bind-runes. These look as if a kind of serif has been added to the runes: Υ A J Y V . I would like to suggest that these lines were used to encrypt the introduction: they resemble normal branches but lack their graphematic functions.

Even if these branches are not always identically formed – some are possibly somewhat shorter or longer than others, while some are not completely straight but rather somewhat curved – it is nonetheless very clear that the same principle underlies them all: a short ascending or descending line which is placed to the right and/or left of the stave and reaches the edge. Rune 9 has a branch to the left of the mainstave which cannot be described as particularly straight, although its formation can be explained by lack of space: it would have been difficult to make it completely straight due to the lack of space between runes 8 and 9. Removal of these branches results, instead of $\text{X}|\text{X}|\text{Y}|\text{A}|\text{V}|\text{J}|\text{V}|\text{A}|\text{V}$, in the runes: $\text{X}|\text{R}|\text{V}|\text{A}|\text{V}|\text{J}|\text{V}|\text{A}|\text{V}$. Rune 8 (X) however consists only of these short, straight, ascending and descending branches, for which reason I allow them to remain. I see no option other than to regard the sign as a bind-rune $\widehat{\text{rk}}$, since my reading of the rune would otherwise be affected by my interpretation. Westlund believes (1989:44, fn. 23) that it is “systematically appealing [...] not to operate with bind-runes at all in the inscription”.¹⁹² He is therefore here forced for no valid reason to choose the reading k over r ; for this he is also criticised by Grønvik. I believe that in this case it is methodically more correct to either remove all branchlike lines on rune 8 or to allow them to remain. Removing them all from rune 8 seems however contrary to the very principles of the inscription. One must presume this rune has branches, since we otherwise obtain an i -rune, which contradicts the observed principle that i -runes are not encrypted in the introductory section. Nor are two successive i -runes consistent with the principles of the inscription.¹⁹³

Here I fall into a dilemma: if I allow myself to recognise a bind-rune in the introduction, then why not recognise several, which perhaps consist of short, straight, ascending and descending branches, whereby these become graphematic, just as with rune 8? As I observe in the catalogue (no 40), however, r. 6 t has a very weakly drawn bow, which the carver for some reason did not make clearer at a later stage. Rune 6 would otherwise be conspicuous in the introduction as the only *simple* rune beside the i -runes. It seems however that it was planned to also make this into a bind-rune. Why was this intention never realised? I can only assume that it was due to the carver wanting to retain the clear and transparent principle which I described above. The bow of the t -rune would have been contrary to such a principle and made the interpretation of the

¹⁹² “systematiskt tilltalande [...] att överhuvudtaget ej räkna med binderunor i inskriften”

¹⁹³ The inscription does have two u -runes following each other (rr. 121–122) – while the u -rune is double-read in other places in the inscription – but these are on two different rows.

introduction impossible; it presumably also seemed unsuitable, perhaps even too revealing, with several descending branchlike runes on the **t**-rune. The carver therefore allowed the **t** to remain simple and did not retrace the bow which had initially been sketched.

Even if other explanations can be offered instead for rune 6 (e.g. that the carver first intended to write **p** rather than **t**, but then had a change of mind), it remains fairly certain that not all of the complex signs in the beginning should be understood as real bind-runes.

Mindy MacLeod (2002:171) has already observed the dominance of **m** and **r**-runes in the introduction and cautiously suggested that decorative serifs of some kind may have been added to the runes, although she did not develop her explanation of what type of decorative serifs these could have been. I believe that they consist of short, straight, ascending and descending lines. The principle is simple and transparent, so the intention cannot have been to obscure the content of the inscription. It is easy to understand just what Westlund (1989:44) means when he writes: "Already as my eyes fell for the first time on [...] the inscription, I thought myself able to see the word **risti** in the runic sequence 3–7".¹⁹⁴ At the same time, the carver did not wish to make it overly easy for the reader, which may explain why the non-graphematic branches correspond to those of several runes: **k**, **m**, **r**, inverted **k** or reversed **k**. It is possibly also for this reason that the carver allows the short, straight, ascending or descending branches in rune 8, **K**, to be graphematic, which makes it more difficult for the reader to discern the principle.

MacLeod (2002:166–170) believes that similar bind-runes with non-graphematic branches occur on two runestones in Uppland, namely U 163 and U 313. Källström does not agree, regarding the runes on the stones as best explained as the result of corrected miscarvings.¹⁹⁵ MacLeod (p. 166) further observes that "[w]hile again, the lack of any consistent technique for identifying which of the branches are functional causes difficulties, the formulae conform well enough to stereotypical rune-texts to allow a reasonably confident interpretation." It is thus in her opinion possible only with the help of stereotypical texts to identify which branches are graphematic and which are not.

The text obtained in the introduction can, depending on which branches in rune 8 are graphematic and whether *rīsta* is declined as a strong or weak verb, be interpreted as:

- 1) *Hæ̃r rīsti'k þēr berg, Bōfi* 'Here I carved/may I carve protection for you, Bove'.
- 2) *Hæ̃r rīst ik þēr berg, Bōfi* 'Here I carve/carved protection for you, Bove'.
- 3) *Hæ̃r rīstik þēr berg, Bōfi* 'Here (you, he) carve/s protection for you, Bove'.

¹⁹⁴ "Redan då mina ögon första gången föll på [...] inskriften, tyckte jag mig i runföljden 3–7 se ordet **risti**."

¹⁹⁵ The *Rune Rede* 26, May 3rd 2007 in Uppsala.

4) If we alternatively assume that the verb *rista* in 1 pers. sg. pres. could be conjugated with the *r*-ending in runic Swedish as in Old Swedish, we can read all the branches on rune 8 and obtain the sentence *Hæ̃r rīstir'k þēr berg, Bōfi* 'Here I carve protection for you, Bove'.

The introduction appears stereotypical, since we know of a similar curse used by Egil Skallagrímsson, on erecting his pole of shame against King Erik Bloodaxe and Queen Gunnhild, which begins in a similar way: 'Here I place ...'. He thereafter carves runes on the pole containing the whole curse (*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* chap. 57:171):

Hann tók í hönd sér heslistong ok gekk á bergsnos nokkura, þá er vissi til lands inn; þá tók hann hrosshöfuð ok setti upp á stongina. Síðan veitti hann formála ok mælti svá: "Hér set ek upp níðstong, ok sný ek þessu níði á hönd Eiríki konungi ok Gunnhildi dróttningu [...]; hann sneri ok höfðini inn á land, en hann reist rúnar á stong-inni, ok segja þær formála þenna allan.

He took a hazel pole in his hand and went to the edge of a cliff which faced in towards the land. Then he took a horse head and placed it on the pole. Then he made a curse and proclaimed: "Here I place a pole of shame, and turn this shame towards King Erik and Queen Gunnhild [...]; he turned the head in toward land and he carved runes on the pole which proclaimed the whole curse.

The runic inscription on a wooden stick from Rathausmarkt, Schleswig (DR Schl3), dated to the eleventh century, which is composed in *ljóðaháttir* verse metre, has a formulaic introduction: **runar : iag : risti : a : rikiata : tre** *Rúnar iak risti ā rækianda trē* 'Runes I carved on the driving(?) wood'. An additional two formulaic inscriptions with similar phrases occur on the Østermarie plate and the Skänninge plate. We also have a similar introduction on a runestone from Sködinge churchyard, Sö 66 (dated to Pr 4), although with a different verb: **hiar ritir kulaifr** *Hier rettir Guðleifr* 'Here *Guðleifr* erects [this stone]'.

In the case in question, we thus have both a technical principle which helps us to identify non-graphematic branches, and a typical introduction: 'here I carve/carved'.

3.3.4.2 Runes 20–56 (rows A 2–4)

I divide these rows into the following words: **mir fulti hur is þer uis in bra_ alt ilu fran bufa**. The runic sequence **mir** can be understood as prep. *meðr*. There are a number of examples of this spelling from Östergötland (Ög 8, Ög 111, Ög 136), Uppland (U 431) and Gästrikland (Gs 13). The runic sequence **fuliti** can be explained as corresponding to an Olcel. noun *tý* or *tæ* n. 'help, assistance' with the prefix *full-* which expresses fullness. The word *tý* or *tæ* is derived from the verb *tjóla/tjá* > *týja* 'to help'. The form *tý* is rare in Old Icelandic while there are several certain attestations of *tæ* (ÁBM). The corresponding verb has been preserved in Swedish dialects in the form *tya* 'manage, be able to, extend, reach' (Hellquist: *ty* 2).¹⁹⁶ There is one attestation in *Fáfnismál*

¹⁹⁶ 'orka, förmå, sträcka sig, räckta till'

(verse 6) of the verb *fulltýja* ‘give full help’ in 3 pers. pl. pret. *fulltýðu*. Corresponding forms are also found in Old High German and German respectively: *follaziohan* > *vollziehen* ‘accomplish, execute’ (Hellquist, *ty* 2).¹⁹⁷

The compound *fulltý* is not attested as such, but there are many related words with the prefix *full-*, including *fullting*, which also means ‘help, assistance’ and can be both neuter and feminine. The word derives from **fulltýing* according to Hellquist (*ty*) and ÁBM (*fullting*). We also find attestations of masculine forms of the word, *fulltingr*, as well as words such as *fulltingja* ‘help’, *fulltingsmaðr* ‘helper’ and *fulltingjari* ‘helper’.

It is difficult to determine with certitude how this word would be declined in the dative, but it would most likely be *tȳ* or *tȳ(i)* (the latter case would require double-reading of the *i*-rune). It is thus possible to imagine that the runic sequence **mirfullti** could represent *meðr fulltȳ(i)* ‘with complete assistance/complete help’. The employment of the *i*-rune to represent /y/ is not uncommon, and many examples of this may be adduced (Lagman 1990:37–42).

It may be debated whether these words, ‘with complete assistance’, belong to the preceding sentence or if they instead begin the following one. They most probably comprise a continuation of the first sentence, which then reads: ‘Here I carved/carve/may carve help for you, Bove, with complete assistance’.

The runic sequence **hur** can be interpreted in different ways depending on the continuation. The most likely interpretation understands it as corresponding to the Old Icelandic word *hyrr* m. ‘fire’ (*Norrøn ordbok*). A potential weakness of this suggestion is of course that the word is carved with the **u** rather than the **y**-rune, but the carver is similarly inconsistent in dotting **i** and **k**-runes. Not all of the words containing /e(:)/ or /æ(:)/ are carved with the rune **e**; most are carved with **i** (**pir** *pēr* 9–11, **birg** *berg* 12–15, **mir** *meðr* 68–70, **iru** *eru* 119–121), and of the three words with /g/ only one is carved with a **g**-rune (the aforementioned **birg**).

The word *hyrr* is used most often in Old Icelandic in poetry, both in kennings for ‘gold’, ‘warrior’, ‘sword’ (see *Lexicon Poeticum* and *Skaldic Project*) and in its true meaning of ‘fire, flame’. This may refer to fire lit by enemies as well as supernatural fire which burns by itself on the cairns of the dead (cf. *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* p. 18).

The following section can now be interpreted in almost the same way as suggested by Westlund but without the unnecessary double-readings. I interpret the runic sequence **isþeruis** as *es þēr vīss* ‘is safe, secure for you’ or ‘is known to you’ with the verb *vesa/vera* in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind., the pers. pron. in dat. sg. and adj. *vīss* ‘wise, competent, knowledgeable, safe, known’ in m. nom. sg. The sentence thus reads: ‘Fire is safe for you (you can rely on fire) with this complete assistance (i.e. the runic plate or the invocation).’ The following sentence can then be interpreted as Grønvik suggested: **in bra alt ilu fran bufa en**

¹⁹⁷ ‘utföra, verkställa’

brā allt illu frān Bōfa ‘who took away all evil from Bove’. The runic sequence **bra** is interpreted by Grønvik as 3 pers. sg. pret. *brā* of the OWS verb *bregða*; it is formed with the dative and has many meanings such as ‘move quickly, turn, throw, pull, change, terminate, destroy’. The sequence **alt** is interpreted as adv. *allt* in n. acc. sg. of OWS adj. *allr*, which means ‘everywhere; in all respects, completely; already; entirely, equally, altogether’ (Fritzner).¹⁹⁸ I prefer this variant to Westlund’s *in bra_alti_jilu fran bufa* *En brā (h)aldi illu frān Bōfa* ‘And may the lightning keep evil (away) from Bove’, since one is not then forced to labour with an unattested noun **brā* meaning ‘lightning’, nor posit several double-read runes in the same sentence.

Fire is an age-old means of protection against trolls. There are many attestations of this use in Swedish folk belief, of which a great number concern the carrying of fire (e.g. embers or a burning match) between the body and clothes as protection against trolls and other supernatural forms of evil (DFU JX: B10a). Rituals with fire as a form of protection against disease are mentioned in the Edda, e.g. in *Hávamál* (verse 137):

*Ráðumk þér, Loddfáfnir,
en þú ráð nemir, [...]
hvars þú ǫl drekkir,
kjós þú þér jarðar megin,*

I advise you, Loddfáfnir,
but you may take advice [...]
when you drink ale,
seek help from the power of the
earth.

*þvíat jörð tekr við ǫldri,
en eldr við sóttum [...]*

As earth helps against intoxication,
And fire against illnesses [...]¹⁹⁹

The sentence can be understood as ‘Fire is safe for you who took away all evil from Bove’. In this case, the transition from second to third person and the change of tense in the sentence make more sense. The sentence could even mean ‘you can rely on the fire, (the one) which took away all evil from Bove’. In this case, the conj. *en* is also most fitting as it “serves as a particle of transition where the speech is interrupted by changing from direct to indirect speech, leaving one topic and beginning a new one, [or] turning from one person to another” (Fritzner: *en*, 5).²⁰⁰ In this instance, the speaker shifts from speaking to Bove to speaking about him in the third person. Fritzner (*en*, 6) also notes that the conj. *en* “joins 2 sentences which are in a certain logical relationship with each other, the nature of which is not indicated by the connecting particle but is apparent from the context”;²⁰¹ this also accords well with the circumstances here.

¹⁹⁸ ‘overalt; i alle henseender, aldeles; allerede; helt, lige, alt’

¹⁹⁹ Translation based largely on Brate 1913.

²⁰⁰ “tjener til overgangspartikel hvor talen afbrydes derved, at man gaar over fra Oratio directa til Oratio indirecta, forlader et æmne og begynder paa et nyt, vender sig fra en person til en anden”

²⁰¹ “forbinder med hinanden 2 sætninger, der staa til hinanden i et vist logisk forhold, hvis beskaffenhed ikke angives ved den forbindende partikel, men fremgaar af sammenhængen”

3.3.4.3 Runes 57–91 (rows A 4–5 and B 1)

I segment these runes into the following words: **þor keti hans mir þem hamri sam hur hafi kam**. I interpret the resulting phrase, like Nilsson (1976), as *þōrr gēti hans me(ð)r þēm hamri sām ūr hafi kam* ‘May Thor protect him with the hammer which came from the sea’ (see section 3.2.4.1 on the name *þōrr* in other runic inscriptions). There are two problematic areas here, both of which can nonetheless be resolved. The first is the runic sequence **sam**. I interpret this as the rel. pron. *sem*, although in Uppland and Södermanland this is usually written with the **u**-rune, **sum**. There is nonetheless one attestation of the form *sem*, spelt **sim**, on a runestone from Fjuckby (U 1016) which is dated to the early eleventh century, as well as a likely further attestation, <ſ>**im**, on a runestone from St. Peter’s church ruin (U 395), dated to 1070–1110. The form **sam** is found on a Danish runestone from Rimsø (DR 114), dated to the Jelling Age. The carver of the Kvinneby plate presumably pronounced the pronoun as *sem* or *sām*. Another problematic area is **hur**, which I interpret as prep. *ur* ‘out of, from’ with supplementary *h*. Such occurrences of supplementary *h* are not particularly unusual in the Viking Age, especially in Uppland. We know that the carver Öpir, for example, used unetymological **h**-runes five times in initial position before rounded vowels (Åhlén 1997:104 f.). It should also be mentioned that examples of supplementary *h* do not otherwise occur on Öland; there are however examples of the loss of *h* (Öl 9, Öl 19, Öl 28).

It can hardly be doubted that Thor and the hammer belong together. What is strange in this context is however the explicit mention of the hammer in the inscription. When the inscription was carved, the hammer Mjölnir should have been such an obvious attribute of Thor that unless there was a particular reason, its mention should have been redundant in an incantation. The explicit mention of the hammer perhaps does not seem so strange to us today, as we are more accustomed to narratives about Thor than to incantations featuring his name. This is possibly also the reason that none of the interpreters of the Kvinneby plate investigated this statement more closely. If we nonetheless attempt to consider the inscription through the eyes of its contemporaries, it is not only the apparently trivial reference to the hammer which requires an explanation, but also the fact that the hammer is said to have come from the sea. Of all the tales of Thor and his hammer, why does the carver choose to focus on the one about the hammer from the sea? From this perspective it is also interesting to consider whether there might be a connection between Thor’s hammer and the fire mentioned in the previous sentence. Maths Bertell (2003:238) provides an example of a description in Saxo Grammaticus of large metal hammers said to have been used in protective rituals to imitate thunder. I reproduce the quotation in English translation (Fisher 2015, B. II p. 923, § 5.5):

Now Magnus, too, emulated his vigorous pursuits with similar deeds of worth; among other distinctive trophies he had his followers bring back to his native country some unusually heavy implements known as Thor’s hammers, which were venerated by men of the primitive religion on one of the islands. Ancient folk, in their desire to un-

derstand the causes of thunder, using an analogy from everyday life had wrought from a mass of bronze hammers of the sort they believed were used to instigate those crashes in the heavens, since they supposed the best way of copying the violence of such loud noises was with a kind of blacksmith's tool. But Magnus, in his enthusiasm for Christian teaching, hated the heathen religion, and held it an act of piety to rob the shrine of its objects of worship and Thor of his emblems. The Swedes even today look on Magnus as a sacrilegious despoiler of heavenly treasures.

Dick Harrison (2005:211) quotes the same episode and reports that the islands from which the hammers came were Swedish territories:

The chronicler observes that Magnus Nilsson did indeed also plunder in Sweden, more specifically in the Swedish areas which were still pagan. Saxo provides us with an interesting detail here to show the strength of Swedish paganism. Among the magnificent booty Magnus brought back from his harryings on one of the Swedish islands were some so-called Thor's hammers, unusually heavy hammers which were used within the pagan cult.²⁰²

Bertell (2003:201–210) also shows parallels in historical Sami wedding rites, where the bridal couple was married by having fires lit over them with steel and flint (the account is taken from Olaus Magnus), which somewhat resembles a rite described in *Þrymskviða*, where the bridal couple (Thor and the troll) are married with the hammer. Bertell (pp. 227–238) provides several further examples of Thor perhaps having a more direct connection to the lighting of fire, including a new interpretation of an episode in the Prose Edda, where Thor is challenged by Hrungnir, leading to an irremovable piece of the latter's whetstone becoming stuck in his head. In the light of the Sami and Finnish material, Bertell believes that there is a connection between Sami firelighting rituals and this episode. Bertell's (2003:203 f., 206) conclusion on the relationship between Thor and the fire is as follows:

Consecrating to Thor and lighting a fire may have been a part of the same idea. [- - -] The protection of fire and Thor in this way have a slight overlap. [- - -] Since Thor is the principle enemy of the giants, it is probable that the lighting of fire may imitate the very presence of the god of thunder. [- - -] It would be wrong, however, to regard Thor and fire as synonymous. The protective power of fire is something that humans had long been aware of. The ideas associated with Thor and fire therefore became two sometimes overlapping spheres. Fire and its properties are in every way a broader phenomenon and the examples of Thor being associated with fire actually comprise only a small part of a larger context.²⁰³

²⁰² "Krönikören noterar att Magnus Nilsson minsann också plundrade i Sverige, närmare bestämt i de svenska områden som ännu var hedniska. Saxo skänker oss här en intressant detalj för att visa på den svenska hedendomens styrka. Bland de praktbyten Magnus förde med sig från sina härjningar på en av svenskarnas öar fanns några så kallade Torshammare, osedvanligt tunga hammare som brukades inom den hedniska kulten."

²⁰³ "Att *víga* till Tor och att slå eld kan ha varit en del av samma idé. [- - -] Eldens och Tors beskydd tangerar på så sätt varandra. [- - -] Eftersom Tor är jättarnas främste fiende så är det sannolikt att eldslagningen kan härma just åskgudens närvaro. [- - -] Det vore dock fel att kalla Tor och elden för synonyma. Eldens skyddande verkan är rimligen något som mänskligheten känt till länge. Föreställningarna kring Tor och kring elden har därför kommit att bli två sfärer som ibland överlappar varandra. Elden och motiven kring denna är en vidare företeelse på alla sätt och de exempel där Tor förknippas med eld utgör snarare bara en liten del av ett större sammanhang."

Also suggestive of a connection between Thor and fire in the opinion of Bertell (2003:207) are archaeological finds such as firelighting stones from the Iron Age as well as Iron-Age arrowheads, clubs, axes and hammers or naturally-shaped Neolithic stones or fossils which were assigned cultic functions. Such thunderstones could be called *torshammare*, *torsviggjar*, *torskilar*, *åskpilar*, *goviggjar* and so on. They were considered to be divine weapons possessing great magical powers. Bo Almqvist (1974:534) writes that *torsviggjar* ('tools of Thor') could protect against lightning and wood-fires and that forest fires could be extinguished with their help; they could heal all kinds of human and animal diseases and guaranteed luck in hunting and fishing. The thunderstones were usually placed in different areas of the home. This seems to have been a strong folk tradition from long before the Viking Age, lasting almost until modern times (DFU: *åsksten*). A large number of thunderstones (83 examples) found in older cultural layers in Lund (from the end of the tenth century until the 1500–1600s) can be adduced as examples from the end of the Viking Age and Middle Ages. Most of these finds were made in connection with profane buildings (Carelli 1996:153–170).

Peter Carelli (1996) provides a detailed account of the tradition of thunderstones in Sweden with many examples from mediaeval sources and ethnological testimonies from the 1800–1900s; he also describes more generally the universal spread of the tradition with examples from almost the whole world, as well as the underlying religious conceptual world. He confirms that the Stone-Age finds from mediaeval Lund should be explained as "amulets considered to give protection and luck to whoever discovered them"²⁰⁴ (p. 164) and can be regarded as an important part of the ritual and magical tradition popularly associated with the god of thunder. Carelli also observes that a number of the thunderstones show damage which can only be explained by their being used in magical cures (p. 160).

This might allow an answer as to why the hammer is referred to on the Kvinneby plate. I believe that it was mentioned for the purpose of drawing a parallel with a ritual, rather than simply for the banal reason that it was Thor's throwing weapon, a fact generally known. A situational parallel could be created in an incantation in order to effectively perform a fire ritual meant to protect or heal. The second Merseburg charm – a spell in Old High German which was written down in the tenth century – was constructed in this way, describing a situational parallel to heal a horse. This charm mentions Odin's riding of a horse, and the leg injury of Balder's horse which is healed by Odin (Braune & al. 1969: 89).

There is even a large group of so-called narrative charms which describe a situational parallel, often in the form of a dialogue. Skemer (2006:105) believes that "People turned to such narratives, which metaphorically erased barriers of time between past and present, in hope of reaping the benefits of supernatural

²⁰⁴ "amuletter som ansågs ge skydd och lycka till upphittaren"

protection and healing, like a particular mythological personage.” While in the case of the Kvinneby inscription we have no such narrative tale, we have the redundant reference to the hammer, which may now possibly be explained as an attempt to construct a kind of parallel, perhaps to a ritual of some kind which involved a thunderstone in the form of a hammer or even a real hammer of metal. It is interesting to note that MacLeod & Mees (2006:28) also emphasise the narrative character of the Kvinneby inscription:

This is not merely a protective invocation, however; rather, the inscription refers to an episode from a myth featuring Thor, which suggests we are dealing with a narrative charm. [- - -] Typically these recounted mythological episodes in which a god overcame some adversity, the idea being that a similar adversity would thus be overcome by the owner of the charm.

We also encounter other charms featuring hammers as the agent of healing: in an Anglo-Saxon charm a sledgehammer is used in an attempt to create a healing parallel (Grendon 1909:137):

‘If a man’s head be distorted,’ reads the former, ‘lay the man with face upward; drive two stakes into the ground at the armpits, then place a plank obliquely over the feet and strike three times upon it with a sledge-hammer. His skull will soon be right.’ The remedy is clearly based on parallelism and association of ideas. The blows on the plank simulate the blows which, directly applied to the head, might restore it to a normal shape, but which, in the nature of the case, cannot be so applied.

We do not know in which way or form the hammer was used in the case of the Kvinneby plate. Nor can we say what kind of ritual was involved, although it seems likely to have involved some form of fire. Thor, fire and the hammer are also united in a long-lived Scandinavian belief that thunder and lightning occur when Thor hunts trolls and other undesirables with his throwing weapons. (It was gradually forgotten that only one weapon, the hammer Mjöllnir, returned to him, and Thor was thought to have a new weapon each time.) Ebbe Schön (2005:211–216) describes the role of Thor in late agrarian society: some of the stories were written down at the end of the sixteenth century while others are as late as the twentieth century, but they are united by this belief. It is interesting to observe that even the educated subscribed to the idea that thunder and lightning occurred when Thor was hunting trolls. Johan Bureus himself, for example, claimed to have seen a flash of lightning burning two trolls to death, and he further recounted that he took their bones and blood home (Schön 2005: 216).

Stories about Thor and thunder often concern people unwillingly providing shelter in their clothes to some creature, and describe how things turned out for them: “For people it was a matter of behaving in such a way that they were not killed by mistake by the thunder” (Schön 2005:212).²⁰⁵ It seems likely that the Kvinneby plate was thought to protect against such accidents, perhaps after some form of fire ritual and after the recital of the charm and the carving of the

²⁰⁵ “För människan gällde det att uppträda så att hon inte blev dödad av misstag när åskan gick.”

runes. The plate would then be hung around the neck close to the body and in this way protect its wearer both from evil creatures who attempted to hide in clothes and from the lightning, should Thor hunt the evil creature. The inscription in fact contains a remarkably vague description of the creature being driven away from Bove. It is simply called ‘the evil one’. This may indicate that the purpose of the inscription was not to repel a specific demon responsible for sickness but more generally to protect against all possible kinds of evil creature, which accords well with Thor’s pursuit of diverse dangerous creatures such as giants, trolls and other undesirables.

3.3.4.4 Runes 92–115 (rows B 1–2)

These runes can be separated into **fly fran iluit fœr eki af bufa**. I have attempted to find a better solution for the sequence **iluit** than Lindquist’s *illvætt* ‘evil creature’. The word *illvætt* itself fits well in an incantation of this type; the problem is that the form of the word lacks an ending, which, as mentioned several times, Lindquist (1987:33) attempts to explain as a vocative singular form which he regards as an “archaic tradition”.²⁰⁶ I find it difficult to believe that the vocative case could be attested so late in Scandinavia; Lindquist (1987:33) moreover seeks support for his vocative hypothesis in Sigtuna plate 1, which in his view shows two endingless forms of the word *ulfr*.²⁰⁷ The Sigtuna plate has only one endingless form, however, for which a different albeit related explanation can be provided (see section 3.2.4.4). Instead of an address, Westlund here prefers a prepositional expression: ‘Flee from the evil creature!’, but is thereafter forced to operate with an implied pronoun: ‘(It?) gets nothing from Bove’. I wish therefore to suggest a different interpretation which solves the problem of lack of subject in the following sentence but at the same time deprives us of the word *illvætt*: *Flý frān illu. Vitt fœr ækki af Bōfa*. ‘Flee from the evil. Magic gets nothing from Bove’. The advantage of my proposal is that we achieve a functional syntax with a noun corresponding to Olcel. *vitt* n. ‘magical agent’ (Fritzner),²⁰⁸ ‘witchcraft, charms’ (Cleasby & Vigfusson). The sentence *Flý frān illu* may be directed at Bove, while the following phrase *Vitt fœr ækki af Bōfa* refers to him in the third person and has the character of an affirmation. The same transition from speaking to Bove to speaking about him in 3 pers. is seen in rows 3–4.

The translation by Lindquist and Westlund ‘(It) gets nothing from Bove’ has been criticised by Grønvik (1992:79) and Louis-Jensen (2006:280) for failing to provide a comprehensible meaning. I cannot agree with this criticism. The expression *fá ekki af e-u* ‘obtain nothing of what one seeks’²⁰⁹ is found in Fritzner’s

²⁰⁶ “tradition från en arkaisk tid”

²⁰⁷ As we have seen, Lindquist (1932:58) rejected the vocative hypothesis while working on Sigtuna plate 1, although he evidently resurrected it during his many years of work on the Kvinneby plate.

²⁰⁸ ‘trolddomsmiddel’

²⁰⁹ ‘intet opnaa af hvad man søger’

dictionary. Fritzner provides two additional examples of the expression: 1) *Þ. brauzt nú til heraðs af nýju ok fékk ekki af heraði* ‘Þ violently infiltrated the area again, and/but got no control over any part of the area’; 2) *þetta mál fluttu G. ok svá, ok féngu ekki af* ‘G. also held (presented) this view (in a lawsuit), and/but (he/they) got nothing from the process’. It is important to observe that the word *ekki* is a neuter pronoun here occurring in the accusative. The expression *fá ekki af e-u* corresponds exactly to the inscriptional **uit fer eki af bufa** ‘magic achieves nothing with Bove’. It is true that we are not privy to what this ‘nothing’ signifies, but the sentence can be accounted comprehensible.

I thus interpret the runic sequence **fer** as *fæR* 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. of the OWS verb *fá* in the sense of ‘achieve’. We must then allow for some form of *i*-mutation (Noreen 1904, § 561.1 note 4). Nilsson (1973, 1976), Grønvik (1992) and Louis-Jensen (2006) choose to interpret **fer** as *ferr* from the verb *fara* 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. The problem with this interpretation is that the **r**-rune does not here represent etymological /r/; this is highlighted by Louis-Jensen (2006: 271), whereby she also observes that the assimilation of /rr/ does not usually result in /r/ (cf. also Larsson 2002:40). She nevertheless allows the interpretation “because this inscription obviously shows confusion of /r/ and /R/ in final position in one syllable words too”,²¹⁰ and because she is unsuccessful in finding “any counterexamples (i.e. examples of /rr/ written as **r** after a palatal vowel) in inscriptions where **r** occurs”.²¹¹ Her arguments nonetheless seem very weak: counterexamples of the latter can be adduced (see e.g. Ög 181, **asur** *Assurr* and **eftir** *æftir*), and the runes **r** and **r** are not actually confused in final position in the inscription.

3.3.4.5 Runes 116–143 (rows B 2–4)

The final part of the inscription is interpreted by all scholars (with the exception of Nilsson’s first interpretation from 1973) as **kup iru untir hanum auk yfir hanum** *Guð eru undir hānum auk yfir hānum* ‘Gods are under him and over him’. I see no reason to seek a new interpretation of this part but incorporate it here; I further agree with the suggestion by Hultgård (1988:142) that the phrase is symbolic and means that Bove is protected on all sides. It somewhat resembles the message in charms against magic of the type found in this Danish formula written down in the eighteenth century (Ohrt 1917:469):

In the name of Jesus I go or come in; The Lord is with me on all my paths. I, N.N. am free from all magic, harm by sorcery, envy and all other evil and the cunning of Satan; my Saviour is Jesus Christ.²¹²

²¹⁰ “fordi det vitterlig er sammenblanding mellem /r/ och /R/ i final stilling også i enstavelsesord i indskriften”

²¹¹ “nogen modeksempler (dvs. eksempler på /rr/ skrevet som **r** efter palatal vokal) i indskrifter hvor **r** forekommer”

²¹² “I Jesu Navn gaar eller kommer jeg ind; Herren er med paa alle mine Veje. Fri er jeg N.N. fra al Trolddom, Forgjærelser, Misundelse og alt andet Ondt og Satans List; min Frelser er Jesus Krist.”

The phrases ‘Gods are under him and over him’ and ‘The Lord is with me on all my paths’ show typological similarities, even if the latter can be supposed to be inspired by the Bible, and they must have met the same needs in the readers of the formula: the feeling of being surrounded by divine powers.

3.3.4.6 The picture of the fish



Figure 19. The picture of the fish on the Kvinneby plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

I find the explanation for the carved depiction of a fish as no more than a sign that Bove was a fisherman or as ‘suited’ the inscription’s mention of the sea unsatisfactory. It seems more feasible that it is a more specific reminder of Thor, the hammer and the sea. The tale of Thor’s deep-sea expedition to catch the Midgard serpent is well-known. According to *Hymiskviða* (verse 24), he succeeded in baiting the serpent with the head of an ox; he then pulled it to the surface and struck it in the head with his hammer, leading to disastrous consequences.

*Hreingáln hlumðu
en hǫlkn þutu,
fór in forna
fold ǫll saman.
Søkkðisk síðan
sá fiskr í mar.*

The troll[?] roared
the stone foundation shook,
the whole of the old
world fell apart.
Then that fish sank
into the sea.

Identifying the fish as the Midgard serpent in Snorri’s verse about the fishing expedition enables us to regard the apparently harmless fish on the runic plate as a symbolic representation of the Midgard serpent embodying Thor’s

strength and his fantastic weapons. According to Snorri's Edda (p. 79), the hammer flew after the serpent when it sank down into the sea: "and it is said that it [the hammer] struck the head off the serpent at the bottom of the sea. But to tell you the truth, I believe that the Midgard serpent is still alive and lying out in the sea." In this case it is also reasonable to remind the readers of the charm that the hammer came back from the sea after being thrown at the serpent in Snorri's tale, even though nothing is heard about its return. We know however from other tales that Mjöllnir always returns to Thor, and this was common knowledge in the Viking Age too. Thor's fishing expedition is depicted on four well-known stones: the Altuna stone (U 1161), the Ardre stone on Gotland (G 114), the Hørdum stone on Jutland (DR EM85;274) and the Gosforth stone (no 6)²¹³ in Cumberland, England. Attention has also been drawn by Roger Wikell (2012) to a less celebrated stone, namely the Linga stone (Sö 352), which depicts a ship and an ox head hanging from a rope. Thor's fishing expedition was undoubtedly a familiar motif during the Viking Age; it illustrated both Thor's enormous strength and his desire to protect humanity from evil.

There is one more celebrated story of Thor, the hammer, the sea and the fish, and this is also related by Snorri in his Prose Edda. After killing Balder, Loki escapes by changing himself into a salmon and hiding in a waterfall. The Æsir attempt to catch him with a net, and Loki initially hides at the bottom of the waterfall. He then wants to swim out to sea but, realising that it is too dangerous, instead attempts to leap over the net. On the second leap, Thor grabs him (Snorri's Edda, p. 84). The terrible punishment to which Loki is sentenced is then described – to lie in a cave while a viper drips poison onto his face. His convulsions account for the occurrence of earthquakes. Mythological parallels to this story of the fish responsible for earthquakes are found in other parts of the world (Sadovszky 1995:66).

It is interesting to observe that Snorri's version of the myth of Thor and Loki is unexpectedly similar to Finnish-Karelian *Kalevala* traditions. A great number of charms concerning the birth of fire are found in Finnish-Karelian folk belief and can be divided into three types (Sarmela 2009:334): 1) the fire is lit or kindled; 2) the sparks from the fire fall to earth and cause its destruction; 3) the fish of fire is caught, bringing the fire into the possession of humans. In these charms, the fire may be lit by Ukko or Väinämöinen (and/or Ilmarinen). The fire may be lit in heaven, in the primaeval ocean or on the stones of the sea (Salo 2006:16–18). Sarmela (2009:334) observes that the myth of fire-lighting in the primaeval ocean is based on another myth and part of a greater complex: "Thus, the primaeval ocean version of Origin of Fire would be a part of a diverse myth complex, describing alongside other primordial events the origin of fire-making tools and the first striking of fire with a flintstone tinderbox." He even believes (p. 338) that all three

²¹³ *The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*. See internet sources.

of these components – lighting or kindling fire, fire falling from heaven and capture of the fire fish – “may be held to be the oldest mythological elements of all”. In a number of charms, fire is struck from a shining serpent in the sea. Salo (2006:16) quotes such a spell from Österbotten and translates it into English:

<i>Tulta iska Ilmalainen,</i>	Ilmalainen struck fire,
<i>Väinämöinen välkytteli</i>	Väinämöinen flashed
<i>keskellä merikiveä</i>	amid a sea stone
<i>kirjavasta kärmehestä</i>	from a striped serpent
<i>/kirjavan kärmehen seljäs/</i>	/on the back of a striped serpent/

This and similar texts (Salo p. 16) are somewhat reminiscent of the Kvinneby inscription with its mention of fire, sea and a striking tool (the hammer). It is therefore tempting to suggest that there may have been similar conceptions among the ancient Scandinavians underlying the myth of Thor and Loki. The American folklorist Frog (2013:70) believes that Snorri’s tale of Thor and Loki, in which the Æsir attempt to catch Loki with a net and Thor plays the main role in the capture of Loki, has features in common with the Finnish-Karelian myths about the birth of fire, and that these similarities are hardly coincidental but should be considered in the context of other traditions which seem to comprise a framework of mythological traditions about ‘the heavenly smith’:

The sparks struck by the heavenly smith are further connected with a narrative sequence in Finnic and Baltic material; where [a] Baltic parallel appears in Norse mythology connected with the smith of heaven [...]. [The relevant footnote reads:] The origin of the net and capture of a fish (Loki; the fish swallowed the spark in North Finnic) in an act of group seine-fishing where Þórr (a smith of heaven figure), is attributed the central role in the capture.

The similarities between Snorri’s tale and Finnish-Karelian mythology could nonetheless reflect contacts several centuries older than both Snorri’s Edda and the Kvinneby plate. I do not therefore believe that the fish on the Kvinneby plate should be understood as representative of the fish of fire, however well this would accord with my interpretation. It may nevertheless be supposed that certain local traditions could still have been strong and perhaps even preserve a number of methods and symbols which the prevailing mythology no longer supported or ‘remembered’, but the fact that the hammer is mentioned on the plate indicates that the narrative of ‘the heavenly smith’ and his capture of the fish or firefish, which was possibly more or less common to the Scandinavians and their closest neighbours, had diverged by the eleventh to twelfth centuries. The fish on the runic plate may therefore have awakened associations to Thor and served as a reminder of his strength.

3.3.5 Summary

My transliteration, normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation are:

A: 1 × hir_riſtiṛk þiṛ birg	<i>Hēr rīst ek /rīsti'k þēr berg,</i>
2 buſi miṛ fulti_i hu	<i>Bōfi, meðr fulltý(i). Hyrr</i>
3 r is þer uis in bra_al	<i>es þēr vīss, en brā allt</i>
4 t ilu fran bufa þor keti h	<i>illu frān Bōfa. Þōrr gæti</i>
5 ans miṛ þem hamri sam hur	<i>hans meðr þēm hamri sām ūr</i>
B: 1 hafi kam fly fran ilu_uit	<i>hafi kam! Flý frān illu! Vitt</i>
2 fer eki af bufa kuþ iru	<i>fær ækki af Bōfa. Guð eru</i>
3 untir hanum auk yfir han	<i>undir hānum auk yfir hān-</i>
4 um	<i>um.</i>

Here I carve (may I carve/carved) help for you, Bove, with complete assistance. Fire is safe for you (known to you), (the fire which) took all evil away from Bove. May Thor protect him with the hammer which came from the sea. Flee from the evil one! Magic (evil) achieves nothing with Bove. Gods are under him and over him.

The text is thus an exhortative spell with ritual and narrative elements. Its structure is: 1) the inscription is introduced with a ritual action expressed in words – ‘Here I carve ...’ – whereupon the recipient of the charm is addressed and named. 2) The result of the action is then affirmed – ‘Fire is safe for you ...’ – and the recipient is named one more time, this time without a direct address. 3) The god Thor is subsequently invoked to help the receiver, and a narrative element is introduced in the form of reference to one of Thor’s escapades. The exact event evoked cannot be established with certainty, but it presumably alludes in a general sense to Thor’s magic strength and power and thus constitutes an analogy tale, which via sympathetic magic can help the recipient of the charm. Thor’s constant attribute, the hammer, is mentioned, and again the purpose may be to construct a parallel, presumably to the ritual action which was performed in connection with the carving of the inscription. 4) The recipient is then urged to flee from evil and it is affirmed that magic or evil cannot reach the recipient, whose name is given for the third and final time. This exhortation to the recipient to flee from evil seems to some extent influenced by Christianity. The phrase is somewhat reminiscent of The Lord’s Prayer with its ‘lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil’. 5) The inscription concludes with a sentence which should be understood as protective and all-encompassing: the recipient now enjoys protection on all paths.

3.3.6 Dating of the Kvinneby plate

The Kvinneby inscription has been dated to the eleventh century (MacLeod & Mees 2006:28; McKinnell & al. 2004:65). In SRD the plate is given an even broader dating, from 950–1100 (based on Imer 2007). The plate’s dotted runes (**e**, **y**, **g**) and monographic representation of a diphthong (**þem**) conflict with a

date earlier than the eleventh century. The form of the *óss*-rune is the same as on Sigtuna plate 1, a form which is not found among the earliest eleventh-century variants (see section 3.2.6 and cf. Källström 1999:110).

Perhaps of some interest for dating purposes is the spelling of prep. *meðr* as **mir**. Most attestations of this form are relatively early (Ög 8, Ög 111, Ög 136, U 431, Gs 13). There is nevertheless one exception, namely the Ardre stone (G 114, 1130s), which contains the form **mer**. I therefore advocate the retention of a broad dating of the Kvinneby plate, from 1050–1130.

3.4 Solberga plates 1 and 2 (Öl Fv1976;96A and Öl Fv1976;96B respectively), Öland

3.4.1 Find circumstances and condition of the plates

Two copper plates (Figures 20 and 21 respectively) were unearthed in the autumn of 1972 at archaeological excavations in Solberga 4:11 in Köpingsvik on Öland. The archaeological context of the find can be described as an artisan environment: investigations have shown that the area was the site of many features associated with craft which date to the Viking Age or older Middle Ages (Schulze 1984:5–14).²¹⁴ Both plates were discovered in feature A 403, more precisely in a post-hole. Gustavson (2017:66) writes: “They were found on sifting the sand mixed with soot and topsoil sand which had filled a post-hole”,²¹⁵ which allows the consideration that the plates may have deliberately been deposited in a post-hole in a ritual purpose and might then comprise a building sacrifice.²¹⁶ The feature is thought to be a furnace for the production of iron (Gustavson 2004:63). For a long period the plates had no inventory number, but as they have been formally allocated to SHM they can now be found under find-ID 1182776 (find no 1413, RAÄ: 1533/74).

²¹⁴ Schulze (1984:14) summarises these investigations as follows: “The investigations of 1971–72 at Solberga 4:11 have confirmed this to a high degree [that Köpingsvik was an important trading post] and the investigations at Solberga 4:8 have added to the image of the Viking-Age/early mediaeval site of artisan and mercantile activity. The society seems largely to have had the character of an industrial town. We have so far only found cultural layers and residential remains with traces of activity in the area of horn or bone handiwork, the working of bronze and iron, or limestone polishing.” (“Undersökningarna 1971–72 på Solberga 4:11 har i hög grad bekräftat detta [att Köpingsvik var en betydelsefull handelsplats] och undersökningen på Solberga 4:8 har ytterligare kompletterat bilden av den vikingatida/tidigmedeltida hantverks- och handelsplatsen. Samhället tycks närmast ha haft karaktären av industriort. Vi har hittills bara påträffat kulturlager och huslämningar som haft spår av antingen verksamhet inom horn- och benhantverk, brons- och järnhantering eller kalkstensslipning.”)

²¹⁵ “De kom fram då man sållade den sot- och myllblandade sand som hade fyllt ett stolphål.”

²¹⁶ “A building sacrifice is an object which was sacrificed at a strategic place and time chosen in relation to the construction or extension of a building.” (“Ett byggnadsoffer är ett föremål som vid ett givet tillfälle har offrats på ett utvalt strategiskt ställe i relation till uppförande eller tillbyggnad av byggnadskonstruktion”) (Siech & Berggren 2005:135, cf. also Paulsson 1993:51 and Falk 2008:34–38).

Köpingsvik was a very important meeting place and trading post during the Viking Age and early Middle Ages, and it is therefore not surprising that a number of interesting runic finds have been made there. Particularly interesting is the fact that seven runic plates (including Solberga plates 1 and 2) come from the area. Klinta plates 1 and 2 derive from a mound with a boat cremation at the village of Klinta in Köpingsvik, and three further copper plates have been uncovered during the longstanding archaeological excavations in Solberga. These are designated in the catalogue as Solberga plates 3, 4 and 5. None of these runic plates has a lexical interpretation and they are therefore discussed in Chapter 5. It is also important to point out that no fewer than 70 runestones, today preserved only in fragments, have been found at the first Christian church in Köpingsvik from the end of the eleventh century (Owe 2002). Köpingsvik was thus not only an important mercantile site but also a place where the Christian faith was established early.

The Solberga plates have been read and interpreted by Helmer Gustavson. His interpretation was first published in abridged form (2004) and subsequently in a longer version with a report on the reading (2017). I have investigated the plates three times. The first examination took place in May 2008 at Kalmar County Museum. The two subsequent examinations were undertaken at SHM (September 2014 and November 2015). The plates are considered together here primarily for practical reasons but also because of similarities in the content of the inscriptions. There is no doubt that the runes on both plates were carved by the same hand.

Plate 1 is 86 mm long, 19 mm wide and 1 mm thick. It lacks suspension holes but belongs with plate 2, which has three holes and can be considered as type A. Two of the three holes are round (1 and 3 mm in diameter respectively) and placed on the right short side, while a third square hole is placed close to the centre of the plate.

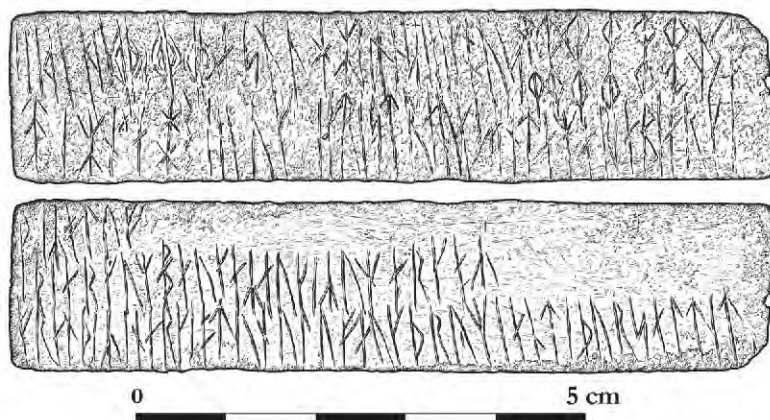


Figure 20. Solberga plate 1. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

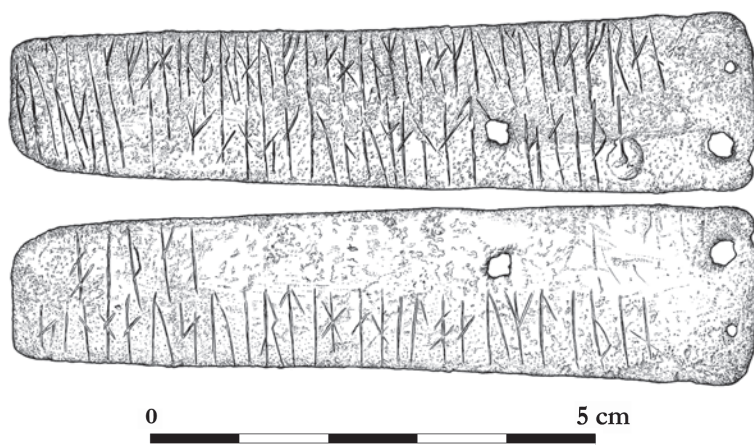


Figure 21. Solberga plate 2. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

The inscription on plate 1 covers both sides. The upper layer of oxide on the obverse is almost entirely missing and the carving lines are shallow and thin, making the runes here hard to read. The reverse is better preserved and the runes are easily discerned. The inscription is divided into rows without separating lines. The reading order is standard: from left to right and from the top to the lower part of the writing surface. Side A contains two rows which fill the entire surface. The first row and half of the second row consist of cryptic runes featuring some conventional runes: this section remains uninterpreted. Side B consists of three rows which cover approximately two thirds of the writing surface: the first row highest up consists of only 7 runes, the second row extends slightly beyond the middle of the writing space and the third row is completely filled by runes.

Plate 2 is 84–85 mm long, 12–19 mm wide and 1 mm thick. Its left short side is somewhat narrower than the right and the upper left corner is more rounded. The inscription on the obverse begins with five large runes which extend from the upper to the lower long side; the inscription is thereafter divided into two rows. The inscription on the reverse also has two rows, but the first comprises only five runes. The runes on the two plates are carved in the same way and by the same hand. It remains to be seen whether the plates share an inscription or whether the inscriptions are separate.

3.4.2 Helmer Gustavson's reading and interpretation

The transliteration, normalisation and translation are taken from Gustavson (2017:89 f.) although unlike him, I mark unidentified runes with a dash rather than a graphic equivalent.

Plate 1:

- A: 1. ---h-----asnuh-iġns---kous-----o-
 2. ---na-----uk--i-kistr auk santa maria biargi
 B: 1. þir oluf
 2. biarg um baaukar auk irumarkar
 3. fran þir in arki_iotun uluf auk þrymianti þurs altit

Kistr ok Sankta Maria biargi þēr, Ōlōf! Biarg um baugar auk eiru-markar! Frān þēr in argi iotunn, Ōlōf, ok þrymiandi þurs alltitt.

May Christ and Saint Mary save you, Oluf! Assist (her), with the help of? rings and healing signs! Always (may be) from you the giant repellent-to-nature, Oluf, and the howling troll.²¹⁷

Plate 2:

- A: 1. þurs ik fa hin þrihufþa hin miramulþika fran
 2. mans kunu han at saipi
 B: 1. oipki
 2. sin haus uirti han i loa um lipin

Þurs ek fā hinn þrihōfða hinn meramuldiga frān manns kunu, hann at sæiði ...

I get the troll away, the three-headed (and) the earthy, from the man's woman. I may by sorcery enchant him thither (where he belongs) ...²¹⁸

Gustavson (2017:88) also proposes a translation of the final runes on the reverse of plate 2 **uirti han i loa um lipin** which may be summarised as: *verði hann ī lo(g)a um liðinn!* 'May he disappear in the fire!'²¹⁹ Gustavson (p. 88) himself however believes that the interpretation "is hardly defensible",²²⁰ as it involves both the verb *verða* being carved with the **t**-rune in **uirti** and the loss of intervocalic /g/ in the word *loga*. I will later discuss the extent to which this interpretation can be defended.

As regards the reverse of plate 1, it can be affirmed that rows 2 and 3 do not quite belong together, with a verb apparently missing. One may further observe that the interpretation *baugar* 'rings' for the runic sequence **baaukar** does not explain why the carver would have required a bind-rune here. The only runic sequence which is not interpreted on plate 2 is **oipkisinhaus**. Gustavson suggests interpreting the sequence **oipki** as the verb *øyðgi* 'devastate' but adds (p. 88) that it is "hardly appealing to labour with a runSw. verbform *øyðgi*, present subj. 3 pers. sing. of a verb

²¹⁷ "Kristus och Sankta Maria må frälsa dig, Oluf! Bistå (henne), med hjälp av? ringar och läke-tecken! Alltid (må vara) från dig den naturvidrige jätten, Oluf, och den rasande tursen."


²¹⁸ "Tursen får jag bort, den trehövdade (och) den jordiga, från mannens kvinna. Jag må genom sejd sejd honom dit (där han hör hemma) ..."

²¹⁹ 'Må han i elden försvinna!': I correct the pers. pron. *han* in Gustavson's normalisation to *hann*.































²²⁰ "knappast är försvarlig"

**øyðga* ‘make desolate, devastate’ that has not been attested earlier”.²²¹ The runic sequence *sinhaus* is interpreted by Gustavson as *sinn hauss* ‘his head’ although he does not succeed in linking this expression to the preceding text.

3.4.3 Interpretation of Solberga plate 1

I retain the order suggested by Gustavson for the runic plate, and like him I begin with plate 1. The obverse of this plate, as already observed, contains unconventional signs. Gustavson (2017:73) suggests that some of these may be characterised as rune-like, and continues that “common to these is that they seem to be linked to the number three”.²²² He attempts to read this section with the help of diverse cipher systems (coordinate runes, balanced runes, the elimination of redundancies and simplification via elimination of the number three), but concludes that the result does not give any comprehensible meaning. He further states (p. 76): “The occurrence of a sign which does not belong in any accepted system of cryptic runes, , repeated six times in a row, may also be at odds with the idea of cryptic runes. [- - -] The occurrence of runes within a sequence of non-runic signs suggests linguistically meaningful cryptic runes.”²²³








































I assume that this part of the inscription, like the rest, should be lexical. In support of this, as already pointed out by Gustavson, is the presence of conventional runes among the cryptic runes as well as the fact that the entire encrypted part in the middle of the row turns into the lexical text *ok Kristr ok Sankta Maria biargi*. I further believe that the signs which Gustavson characterises as rune-like can be read. I wish finally to point out that there is no need to labour with coordinate runes or runes with non-graphematic branches in this part of the inscription, but that all of the unconventional runes can be understood as bind-runes or balanced runes. I provide a review of all the runes in the catalogue and discuss the difficult cases. My new transliteration of plate 1 is:

A: |||                              ||| uk  |

1 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

kristrauksantamariabiarki

45 50 55 60 65

B:                                       

3.4.3.1 Runes 42–75 (rows A 2 and B 1)

I will discuss the unconventional opening runes after consideration of the entire inscription, in section 3.4.3.4. I read the second part of row 2 on side A as well as row 1 on side B as ||| **uk** :| **kristr auk santa maria biargi þiṛ oluf** which I interpret as ‘And may Christ and Saint Mary help you, Oluf’. It is unclear why the conjunction *ok* ‘and’ is bordered by two marks of punctuation, although it may have been the intention of the carver to mark the end of the preceding cryptic section.

Gustavson suggests that the inscription is about childbirth. This suggestion is supported by both the female name and by the verb *bjarga* ‘to help’. It is encountered in the context of delivery in *The Poetic Edda* (*Sigrdrífumál* verse 10), where Sigrdrifa exhorts Sigurd Fafnirsbane to learn *bjargrúnar* in order to be able to help deliver a woman’s baby:

<i>Bjargrúnar skaltu kunna,</i>	You should know helping-runes,
<i>ef þú bjarga vilt</i>	if you want to help,
<i>ok leysa kind frá konum;</i>	and deliver children from women.
<i>á lófa þær scal rista</i>	You should carve them on the hand
<i>ok of liðu spennna</i>	and fasten them on the wrists
<i>ok biðja þá dísir duga.</i>	and ask the <i>dísir</i> to give you help. ²²⁴

Giving birth has always been one of the most dangerous situations faced by women. Edvard Gotfredsen (1956:358) describes childbirth in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages as a period during which people were particularly inclined to rely on magical objects or actions: “Rational means to ease a difficult birth were not known, but different magic actions, invocations and amulets were frequently used.”²²⁵ The giving of life to a new creature may either comprise part of the good scheme of things or, less happily, become a hideous and chaotic situation. The existence of particular invocations and rites for such an occasion is therefore to be expected. In the aforementioned verse, Sigrdrifa advises carving *bjargrúnar* on the palms of the hand and requesting help from the *dísir*. The palms of the hands are encountered again in the poem (*Sigrdrífumál* 17), where the statement that the runes should be carved *á lausnar lófa* ‘on the delivering palms’ seems to emphasise the importance of the action. Here we cannot ignore the fact that the child’s first contact with the world occurs via these very hands of delivery.

There is cause to connect the helping *dísir* with a new interpretation of Merseburg charm 1 by Klaus Düwel (2009). The charm is in fact about *dísir* who bind and unbind fetters. The text is usually understood as intended to assist in combat situations by helping prisoners to escape. Düwel however suggests that the text should be interpreted in the framework of the magic of ‘binding

²²⁴ Based largely on Brate’s translation, 1913.

²²⁵ “Rationelle midler, der kunne fremme en vanskelig fødsel, kendes ikke, men forskellige magiske handlinger, påkaldelser og amuletter blev flittigt brugt.”

and releasing’ and in fact is about help in labour. His argument employs the analysis of both linguistics and the history of religion.

As well as *dísir*, the *vættir* and other creatures could be invoked to assist in labour. Thus Oddrun, for example, in *Oddrúnargrátr* requests help for the pains of labour from the *vættir* as well as from the goddesses Frigg and Freya. Raudvere (2002:145) states that “in later Scandinavian folklore there is a great number of legends telling of females from the ‘little people’ coming to help women in childbed.” She observes (p. 146) that Anglo-Saxon charms for this purpose also exist.

Mary, mother of god, is invoked in several diverse contexts in Swedish and Danish spells, especially in connection with delivery (af Klintberg 1988:41, 130). One of the Swedish spells (with three crosses signifying that the practitioner should make three signs of the cross after reading the formula) derives from Västmanland and is dated to 1722 (af Klintberg 1988:95; cf. also a similar Danish spell in Ohrt 1917:191):

Vid barnsbörd

Jungfru Maria, milda moder,
låna mig nycklar dina,
medan jag låser upp lemmar
och ledamoter mina! †††

At childbirth

Virgin Mary, mother mild,
lend me your keys,
while I unlock my limbs
and my body parts! †††

Both older and younger spells intended to ease childbirth thus exist, and the inscriptions on the Solberga plates could be among the oldest preserved from this group of charms in Scandinavia.

3.4.3.2 Runes 76–100 (row B 2)

Gustavson’s interpretation of side B **biargumābaukaraukirumarkar** is *Biarg um baugar auk eirumarkar* ‘Assist (her), (with the help of) rings and healing signs’.²²⁶ It is not fully satisfactory as it provides no link to the following part of the text; the bind-rune **ab** also seems superfluous. Gustavson (2017:83 f.) considers the possibility of interpreting side B as *Biarg guma baugar ok eirumarkar!* ‘Help, human, rings and healing signs!’²²⁷ but dismisses this idea, since he believes that the masculine noun *gumi* does not fit in this context; one must, moreover, operate with a miscarving (the **a**-rune instead of **i**). I agree

²²⁶ ‘Bistå (henne), (med hjälp av) ringar och läketecken’

²²⁷ ‘Hjälp, människan, ringar och läketecken!’

with this and am inclined to instead attempt to identify a designation for a woman in the runic sequence **biarguma** *biargguma* ‘helping-woman’. The word *bjargrýgr* f., which means ‘helper at childbirth’, is found in Old Icelandic, as is *bjargsmadr* m. ‘person who makes a living through the work of their hands’ (Fritzner).²²⁸ There are also several other compounds employing *bjarg-* in Old Icelandic. The compound *biargrúnar* is attested in runic Swedish and runic Danish (the Skänninge plate and the Østermarie plate).

Söderwall records the words *guma* f. ‘woman, old woman’ and *iordhguma* or *iordha guma* f. in the sense of ‘midwife, earth-woman’.²²⁹ The latter word comes from a mediaeval devotional book, *Siälinna tröst* (‘Comfort of the soul’), from circa 1430. The very interesting personal name *Guma* f. ‘an ogress (troll-woman)’²³⁰ is found in *Norrøn ordbok*; the same name occurs in *Lexicon Poeticum*. This is thus a name of unclear origin designating a troll-woman which may be connected with the masculine noun *gumi*. It therefore remains a possibility that a pre-mediaeval fem. *guma* corresponding to OSw. or OWS *gumi* m. ‘man, person’ could be used about older women, in particular, perhaps, those versed in magic, long before it was recorded in any text.

In the Uppsala Folklore Archives, I found many other later designations for midwives (DFU: *barnmorska* E II:4 C), such as *jordegumma*, *barngumma*, *hjälp gumma*, *hjälpkärring*, *närkvinna*, *ljusmor*, *jordemoder* (approximately ‘earth-woman’, ‘child-woman’, ‘helping-woman’, ‘helping-woman’, ‘near-woman’, ‘light-mother’, ‘earth-mother’); and we see that the designation *biargguma* ‘helping-woman’ accords well with this group. Particularly noteworthy are designations such as *hjälp gumma* and *hjälpkärring*, the first element of which (*hjälp-*) closely parallels *bjarg-*.

The etymology of *jord(e)gumma* is explained by Hellquist as due to the fact that the woman in labour used to lie on the earthen floor, so that the midwife was the one to lift “the newborn baby from the earthen floor”.²³¹ Hellquist also notes the interesting information relating to the custom of giving birth on the earthen floor that “the Lappish [Sami] goddess of childbirth *Madderakka* must for linguistic reasons originally have been the goddess of the household floor.”²³² Reichborn-Kjennerud further discusses the practice of women giving birth on the earthen floor in *Vår gamle trolldomsmedisin* (1933:60), stating that Icelandic women used to give birth lying on the floor. Icelandic sagas also show that this was a common position in which to give birth. In *Ólafs saga hins helga* (in *Flateyrbok* II, p. 8) it is stated that Ásta Guðbrandsdóttir lies *á golfui ok verða æigi lettari* ‘on the floor and cannot give birth’. The same is said of Ragnhildr (in *Flateyrbok* II, p. 263): *þa la Ragnhildr á golfui ok skyllde verða*

²²⁸ ‘fødselshjæperske’; ‘person som hjælper sig til fornødent udkomme ved sine hænder gjer-ninger’

²²⁹ ‘kvinna, gumma’; ‘barnmorska, jordegumma’

²³⁰ ‘ei gyger (trollkvinna)’

²³¹ “det nyfödda barnet från jordgolvet”

²³² “den lapska barnbördsgudinna *Madderakka* av språkliga skäl ursprungl[igen] måste ha varit husgolvets gudinna”

lettari ‘then Ragnhildr lay on the floor about to give birth’. The newborn child was also placed on the ground or the floor directly after its birth according to the early Norwegian laws, and *The Poetic Edda* also mentions earth being energising for the newborn child (Mejsholm 2009:107). All of this is interesting in view of the fact that the rest of the line of the inscription may actually describe what a helping-woman does with the earthen floor on which the labouring woman may be supposed to have lain.

The runic sequence **baukaraukirumarkar** may be understood as two verbs joined by a conjunction: *baugar ok æirumarkar*. The verb **bauga* is not attested in Old Scandinavian sources but can be reconstructed with the help of the OWS noun *baugr* m. ‘something bent, ring, hook’²³³ (*Norrøn ordbok*) and the suffix *-ō*, the basic meaning of which is ‘to come up with’ or ‘to provide with’ (Iversen 1973:164), which transforms this noun to the verb **bauga* with the possible meanings ‘encircle, mark with a ring, bind with a ring’²³⁴ (pers. comm. from Staffan Fridell). The fact that the word *baugr* m. was also known in East Scandinavia is clear from Rietz’ dialect dictionary (*baug*, *bäug* m. ‘ring, finger-ring’) as well as from words such as *bauger* m. ‘ring’, *baugband* n. ‘band around the wrists’ and *baugliþer* m. ‘hand-joint e.g. ring-joint, names for the customary arm-rings used as ornaments in ancient times’²³⁵ all of which are found in the Law of Gotland according to Schlyter’s dictionary.

The next verb may be *æirumarka*, which can be understood as comprised of the first element *æiru-* and the second element *marka*. The first element is a weak form of a word corresponding to the OWS noun *eir* f. ‘shelter, mercy; peace, tranquillity; help’²³⁶ (*Norrøn ordbok*), while the second element runSw. v. *marka* may be understood as ‘draw, mark’ or ‘sign’. The meaning ‘sign’ is shown in the following Old Icelandic example: *lét hann ok marka (= signa) sik Óðni áðr hann dó* ‘He let himself be given (signed) to Odin before he died’ (Fritzner).

The line can now be interpreted as *Biargguma baugar ok æirumarkar* ‘The helping-woman encircles/binds with a ring and marks (signs) with healing signs’. The proposed meaning of **biarguma** as ‘helping-woman, midwife’ forms a natural connection with the following word, *seiðr* m. ‘spell, charm, sorcery’. The word *seiðr* designated a predominantly feminine occupation which was regarded as unmanly (Strömbäck 1935:192; Price 2006:116). The ritual performed by this helping-woman on the earthen floor on which the labouring woman had to lie, namely her drawing of a ring and magical signs on the floor, as well as on the plate, seems to belong to the same type of magical ritual as the one described in the following charm, taken from an Icelandic book of black magic from the sixteenth century (Lindqvist 1921: 57–61, cf. also p. 19):

²³³ ‘noko bøygd, ring, krok’

²³⁴ ‘omringa, märka med ring, binda med ring’

²³⁵ ‘ring’; ‘band om handlederna’; ‘handled eg. ringled så kallad af de i forntiden såsom prydnader brukliga armringar’

²³⁶ ‘livd, skånsel; fred, ro; hjälp’

If you want to bewitch a woman so that she goes to no-one but you, then make a pit in the [earthen]floor over which she usually goes and in there pour blood from the ‘giant spear’ [*iqtun geira*, a kenning for snake?] and draw a ring around there as well as her name and these staves: three (times) ‘inverted’ *mollþurs* and *maðr-runes* [...], and read this incantation: [...] May calamity befall you if you do not love me. Your feet will freeze. Never will you acquire honour or happiness. You will sit as if in fire; your hair will rot, your clothes tear, if you do not voluntarily give yourself to me.²³⁷

The aim of this Icelandic charm is of course to obtain the love of a woman rather than to help her give birth. The person practising this form of black magic nevertheless carries out almost the same ritual actions as in the later situation (drawing on the floor a ring, the woman’s name and magical signs). It is interesting in this context to note the frequent association of trolls with sexual assault of women (Hall 2009; Kuusela 2014). Driving trolls from a woman or beseeching them to force her to intercourse may be thought of as occurring via almost the same ritual actions; it is as though the actions themselves create a doorway allowing entry to magical powers in any direction, depending on the wishes of the practitioner of magic. It is also significant that the practitioner of the Icelandic formula three times carves inverted *mollþurs*, i.e. runes which signify ‘earth-trolls’. On Solberga plate 2, the troll is called **miramulþika**, which is interpreted by Gustavson as *meramuldigr* ‘covered with crushed earth’ and thus contains an adjectival derivation of the word *muld/mold* f. ‘earth, topsoil’. The correspondence with the Icelandic formula is so striking that in my opinion it bolsters Gustavson’s interpretation of the word.

The narrative present in the phrase *Biargguma baugar ok æirumarkar* ‘The helping-woman encircles/binds with a ring and marks (signs) with healing signs’ may seem unusual. Parallels are not lacking, however, for spells which begin by describing in the present tense the actions carried out by the practitioner to achieve a result and follow these with an exhortation (either a command in the imperative or the verb *skola* ‘shall’ in the construction pers. pron. + shall + inf.). Many examples of this can be found in af Klintberg’s *Svenska trollformler* (‘Swedish magic spells’), e.g. no 60 *Vid harfångst* (‘To capture a hare’): “Here I set a trap / here I get a hare / And just as I gnaw on the bones of the hare, / the devil shall gnaw on my bones” (Härjedalen, 1904);²³⁸ no 62 *Hugga kniven i ett spår* (‘To plunge a knife into a path’): “I plunge the knife into a path and there you shall fall into a trap?” (Medelpad, 1919);²³⁹ no 37 *Mot*

²³⁷ “Om du vill förhäxa en kvinna, så att hon inte går till någon annan än dig, så gör en grop i det [jord]golv, varöver hon plägar gå och gjut däri blod från ”jättespjut” [*iqtun geira*, kenning för orm?] och rita en ring där omkring samt hennes namn och dessa stavar: tre (gångar) ”stupade” *Mollþurs*- och *Maðr-runor* [...], och läs denna besvärjelse: [...] Drabbe dig ofärd, om du inte älskar mig. Om fötterna skall du frysa. Aldrig må du vinna ära eller sällhet. Sitte du som i eld; ruttne ditt hår, remne dina kläder, om du icke frivilligt vill giva dig till mig.”

²³⁸ “Här sätter jag en snara / här får jag en hare / Och liksom jag gnager harens ben, / skall fan gnaga mina ben.”

²³⁹ “Jag stampar kniven i fälla och där skall du stupa under en hälla”

bölder ('Against boils'): "Here I draw a ring, around one hundred and fifty [---] Phew! Get away, as soon as that was done!" (Södermanland 1860–70s).²⁴⁰

A telling example is attested from the middle of the seventeenth century from Uppland:

Against enemies

I get up one morning
away from all my worries.
I bind myself with the binds of anger
from man and woman,
from sword, from world,
from all my misfortunes.
Thus shall hate and envy be melted
on me today,
as salt is melted
in fresh water.
††† Amen.²⁴¹

The phrase *Biargguma baugar ok æirumarkar* 'The helping-woman encircles/ binds with a ring and marks (signs) with healing signs' may also be called ritual. (See section 1.4 on these formulas, especially the quote from af Klintberg.)

Spells are rarely exclusively exhortative or ritual but usually comprise a mixture of these and other types of formula (cf. af Klintberg 1988:39). The Solberga inscriptions are no exception: the relevant sentence in the inscription may for example be described as *ritual*, since its words "express the content or purpose of a simultaneous ritual action" (af Klintberg 1988:44).²⁴² The transition from descriptive present to command occurs in the very next sentence of this particular inscription.

3.4.3.3 Runes 101–142 (row B 3)

The next row reads **fran þir in arki_íotun uluf auk þrymianti þurs altit**. Gustavson (2017:81 f.) interprets this as a nominal phrase: *Frān þēr in argi íotunn, Ólof, ok þrymiandi þurs alltīt* 'From you, the giant repellent-to-nature, Oluf, and the howling troll for ever'.²⁴³ The interpretation is problematic as it lacks a predicate. Gustavson is aware of this, writing (p. 81 f.):

²⁴⁰ "Här ritar jag en ring, etthundrafemtio däromkring [- - -] Tvi bort, så snart som det var gjort!"

²⁴¹ "*Mot ovänner* / Jag står upp en morgon / ifrån alla mina sorger. / Jag binder mig med vredes linda / från man och kvinna, / ifrån svärd, ifrån värld, / ifrån all min ofärd. / Så skall hat och avund smältas / på mig i dag, / som saltet smältes / i friska vattnen. / ††† Amen."

²⁴² "uttrycker innehållet i eller avsikten med en samtidig rituell handling"

²⁴³ The translation 'Alltid (må vara) från dig den naturvidrige jätten, Oluf, och den rasande tursen' ['Always (may be) from you the giant repellent-to-nature, Oluf, and the howling troll'] (2007:90) is not as transparent, as it does not clarify the fact that *argi íotunn* and *þrymiandi þurs* cannot be objects in the sentence.

I have not been able to identify any verb phrase. The predicate in such a phrase should be in the subjunctive and the verb should have an intransitive sense and be in the active or medial form, e.g. *fly*, *fara*, *förgås* ‘flee, travel, die’. The invocation could run ‘From you may the giant repellent-to-nature and the howling troll flee’. The runic sequence **altit** may bring to mind the OSw. verb *ælta*, an intensive-iterative construction (proto-Norse **alatjan*) with the meaning ‘set in motion, spur on, drive, incite, hunt, pursue, dispel, drive off’, and the noun formed from this verb *ælta* ‘feverish chills in children; malaria’. As far as I can tell, the runic sequence **altit** cannot be a form of this verb, nor a negated form with the particle (*a*)*t*. The runic sequence should perhaps instead be interpreted adverbially as a formation *alltitt* from *alltiðr* with the meaning of ‘always, constantly’.²⁴⁴

Gustavson overlooks the possibility of interpreting the sequence **altit** as the verb *ælta* in imp. 2 pers. pl. *æltið* with pers. pron. in dual nom. 2 pers., *it*: *æltið-it* = *æltit!* ‘you two go!’ The OSw. verb *ælta* could be used intransitively. Söderwall lists the following meanings for the verb: ‘4) be in motion, travel around, be restlessly active (?)’.²⁴⁵ The phrase may then be interpreted as *Frān þēr in argi iotunn, Ōlqf, ok þrymiandi þurs æltit!* ‘From you, giant repellent-to-nature, Oluv, and the howling troll, you two go!’

The sentence may seem unusual with its imperative directed at two trolls and the woman Oluv drawn into events in a direct address. The addressing of the person(s) affected by the charm is nonetheless a well-known means of both ritualising charms and making them more intensive and alive. We know of many examples addressing demons or dangerous animals (both in singular and plural) in spells in Swedish (af Klintberg 1988:86 f., 99–101) and Danish (Ohrt no 273h, 1063–1065). Podemann Sørensen (2016) writes about these spells containing expressions in the second person which are directed at both those taking part and the objects of the ritual. He observes (p. 13) that “Even more common is however the address to the object of the ritual, i.e. the person or thing against whom the ritual was working or intended to work, the one undergoing the ritual process. [- - -] When 2nd pers. is used of the object of the ritual, this further means that the person officiating finds himself/herself so to speak in the middle of the action. At the same time, 2nd person means simultaneity and presence.”²⁴⁶

The carver of the Solberga plate has in this way created a very powerful expression which draws into the action all the participants in the ritual: the

²⁴⁴ “Någon verbfras har jag inte kunnat identifiera. Predikatet i en sådan fras borde stå i konjunktiv och verbet ha en intransitiv betydelse och stå i aktiv eller medial form, t ex *fly*, *fara*, *förgås*. Besvärjelsen skulle kunna lyda ‘Från dig må den naturvidrige jätten och rasande tursen fly’. Runföljden **altit** kan leda tanken till verbet fornsv. *ælta*, en intensiv-iterativ bildning (urnord. **alatjan*) med betydelsen ‘sätta i rörelse, pådriva, driva, hetsa, jaga, förfölja, förjaga, fördriva’, och det till detta verb bildade substantivet *ælta* ‘feberfrossa hos barn; malaria’. Såvitt jag kan finna kan runföljden **altit** inte vara någon form av detta verb, inte heller någon med partikeln (*a*)*t* negerad form. Runföljden kanske i stället skall tolkas adverbliellt och vara en bildning *alltitt* av *alltiðr* och ha betydelsen ‘alltid, beständigt’.”

²⁴⁵ ‘4) vara i rörelse, fara omkring, vara rastlöst verksam (?)’

²⁴⁶ “Endnu almindeligere er imidlertid tiltale til ritualets objekt, altså den eller det, som ritualet bearbejder eller tænkes at virke på, det som gennemgår den rituelle proces. [- - -] Når 2. pers. anvendes om ritualets objekt, betyder det ydermere, at den officierende så at sige befinder sig midt i handlingen. 2. person indebærer samtidighed og nærvær.”

woman Oluv and her opponents, the trolls, who are driven off with the short and therefore particularly vigorous final word – *æltit!*

Gustavson (2017:78 ff.) discusses his interpretation of adj. *argr* as ‘repellent-to-nature, grotesque, perverse’²⁴⁷ at length. The more common sense of ‘angry, evil’ would also be possible here, although I agree with Gustavson that it seems more likely that *argi iotunn* means something more than ‘angry giant’ here. Further support is found in an example which is not mentioned by Gustavson. The derivation *ergi* f. ‘decadent lust, madness, perversity, evil’ (*Norrøn ordbok*)²⁴⁸ occurs in *Skírnismál* (verse 36, which is quoted below, section 3.4.4.1) in an incantation in which Frey’s servant Skirnir attempts to coerce the giantess Gerd to submit to the god Frey. In verse 31 of the same incantation, the troll is called three-headed, just as on Solberga plate 1. The textual relationship between the concept of *ergi* and the three-headed monster is so clear in *Skírnismál* that it allows us to translate *argi* on the Solberga plate as ‘the grotesque, the perverse’.

The parallel expression on Solberga plate 1 to *in argi iotunn* is *þrymiandi þurs*, which is also discussed at length by Gustavson (2017:80 f.). I agree with Gustavson’s interpretation of *þrymiandi þurs* as ‘the howling troll’.

3.4.3.4 Runes 1–41 (row A 1)

We now return to the introductory runes, which I suggest reading as follows:

||| **pihi** **þþþþ** **pas** **nuh** **mi** **in** **nsi** **ik** **ous** **bbbbb** **bor** ¶ **ttti** **ka** **oss** ||| **uk** ¶|
 1 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

The immediate impression is that the introduction can be interpreted by reading the runes once instead of two, three or six times in the repeated sequences. This would result in: **pihi****pas****nuh****mi****nsi****ik****ous****borti****ka****os**. A similar method is, moreover, used by Grønvik (1996:70, 73, 77, 231) for three runic inscriptions (DR 261, DR 311 and DR IK58). I can provide no interpretation of the entire sequence but discuss only which lexemes may be identified therein.

The initial runic sequence **pihi** **pas** may be interpreted as *þigi þess* ‘Keep this quiet’. The OSw. verb *þighia* means ‘keep silent, keep secret, be still’ (Söderwall).²⁴⁹ We have several certain attestations of the use of the **h**-rune for /y/ in intervocalic position, e.g. in anthroponyms with the first element *Īgul*-, which is often spelt **ihul** (Peterson 2007:116 f.). The expression *þegi þeira orða* ‘do not say these words’ taking a genitive object also occurs in Old Icelandic. This accords with the inscriptional **pas**, which may be interpreted as dem. pron. *þat*, in gen. sg. *þess*. I therefore believe that the relevant phrase may be understood as an introductory warning not to speak the following text aloud. Such a warning may seem unnecessary today, but this need not have been the case for

²⁴⁷ ‘naturvidrig, förvriden, pervers’

²⁴⁸ ‘utuktig lyst, galenskap, argskap, vondskap’

²⁴⁹ ‘tiga, förtiga, vara stilla’

people used to the oral culture of the time, where written texts were regarded as transcriptions of speech.²⁵⁰

The runic sequence **nuh** can possibly be understood as corresponding to adv. *nóg* ‘enough, sufficient, in ample amount’ (*Norrøn ordbok*).²⁵¹ The sequence **mins** may be interpreted as the OSw. refl. verb *minnas* ‘remember someone/thing, recall, name’ (*Norrøn ordbok*)²⁵² in 1 pers. sg. pres. ind., although in this case its ending shows the strong inflectional ending *-s* rather than the expected weak form *-is*. Noreen (1904, § 570, note 1) however observes that such weak verbs sometimes take the strong *-s* ending, exemplifying with the form *minz* for expected *minnis*. It thus seems possible to cautiously accept this interpretation.

The runic sequence **ik** may be interpreted as pers. pron. *ek* ‘I’, and this agrees with the carving of the pronoun in plate 2. We thus obtain the clause ‘I remember enough’ or ‘I name a lot/enough’. I have not been able to convincingly interpret the sequence **ous** (or **kous** with double-reading of the **k**-rune). The sequence **bort** could contain the adverb *braut* > *brott* = *bort* ‘away’.

The concluding runic sequence **kaos** may be interpreted as corresponding to the OIcel. verb *kjósa*, the 1 pers. pret. sg. of which is *kaus*. The verb means ‘1) select, take on; 2) desire, wish, lust; 3) choose’ (Fritzner).²⁵³ An interesting example is found in *Völsunga saga* (chap. 18), where Sigurd asks: *Hverjar eru þær nornir, er kjósa mögu frá mæðrum?* The verb in this context can presumably be understood as ‘deliver’, i.e. ‘Which are the norns, who deliver sons from mothers?’ Almost the same phrase occurs in *Fáfnismál* 12: *hverjar ro þær nornir, er nauðgönglar ro ok kjósa mæðr frá mögum?* ‘which are the norns, who come in times of need and deliver mothers of sons?’ Here *Norrøn ordbok* suggests the meaning ‘release children from the womb’.²⁵⁴

The runic sequence **ir** may be interpreted as corresponding to OIcel. *eir* f. ‘1) shelter, mercy, peace, tranquillity, help; 2) the name of an Æsir goddess of medicine; often used as a skaldic paraphrase for a woman’.²⁵⁵ The word ‘help’ may be in the instrumental dative: ‘with help’. This corresponds with the usage of the word *ro* f. ‘tranquillity, peace’ (*Norrøn ordbok*)²⁵⁶ in the aforementioned verse from *Fáfnismál* 12.

It is difficult to conceive of anything more suited to our inscription than two well-attested words with the respective meanings of ‘delivered’ and ‘help’. I nonetheless have difficulty in extracting a viable meaning from these; an interpretation of the sequence **ous** is moreover lacking. If we allow an implied conjunction and subject in the subsequent sentence, the introduction may be inter-

²⁵⁰ In a discussion of this complicated matter, Clanchy (1992:253 f.) quotes John of Salisbury’s *Metalogicon*: “Fundamentally, letters are shapes indicating voices. Hence they represent things which they bring to mind through the windows of the eyes. Frequently they speak voicelessly the utterances of the absent.”

²⁵¹ ‘nok, tilstrekkeleg, i rikeleg mengd’

²⁵² ‘minne ein, hugse, nemne’

²⁵³ ‘1) udtage, tage til sig; 2) begjære, ønske, attraa; 3) vælge’

²⁵⁴ ‘løyse barn frá morsliv’

²⁵⁵ ‘1) livd, skånsel, fred, ro, hjelp; 2) namn på ei åsynje for lækjekunst; ofta i skaldeomskr. for kvinne’

²⁵⁶ ‘ro, fred’

puted as ‘I name/remember enough [that I] ... with help released (= delivered)’. I advise caution with this interpretation however, in the hope of improving my suggestion in the future.

3.4.3.5 Summary

The transliteration, normalisation and translation of the inscription are as follows:

A: ||| þihiiþþþþþþpasnuhþiinnsiiikousbbbbbbor ¶ ttīṛkaōss ||| uk ı|
kristrauksantamariabiarki

B: þiroluf ¶ biargumabaukaraukirumarkar ¶ franþirinarkiotun
ulufaukþrymiantipursaltit

A: *Pigi þess: nū minns ek ... bort eir kaus (?). Ok Kristr ok sankta Maria biargi*

B: *þēr, Ōlǫf! Biargguma baugar ok æirumarkar. Frān þēr in argi iotunn, Ōlǫf, ok þrymiandi þurs æltit!*

Keep this quiet: I remember/name enough (that I) ... with help released (= delivered) (?). And may Christ and Saint Mary help you, Oluv! The helping-woman binds with a ring and marks/signs with healing signs. Perverse giant and howling troll, go from you, Oluv!²⁵⁷

We thus obtain an exhortative spell with ritual elements. It begins with a phrase of still uncertain interpretation which nonetheless seems clearly cryptic and expressed in *I*-form. It is also likely that the phrase from the outset affirms a successful result for the recital of the formula (it seems to contain verbs such as ‘remember’ and ‘delivered’). The phrase is followed by invocations to divine powers (in this case Christ and his mother Mary) who are addressed and beseeched to help a woman, who is also addressed in her turn. The subsequent ritual phrase describes ritual actions carried out by a helping-woman, presumably the same person who pronounces and carves the spell. The spell concludes with a banishment phrase in which the evil powers are characterised, addressed and driven away while the woman is simultaneously named and addressed.

It is interesting to observe that the expression of result does not occur at the end; instead it opens the inscription as a secret phrase. (I am suitably convinced that the phrase affirms the results, even should my exact interpretation be revised.) Its position in the introduction may be explained by its secret nature: it was not intended to be spoken and even begins with a warning, ‘Keep this quiet’. The magician who carved the inscription (presumably identical to the helping-woman mentioned therein) for some reason wished to begin with the affirmation while at the same time protecting it from the ears and eyes of others, perhaps to retain its magical effect.

²⁵⁷ “Tig om detta: Jag minns/nämner tillräckligt (att jag) ... med hjälp löste bort (= förlöste) (?). Och Kristus och sankta Maria må hjälpa dig, Oluv! Hjälpkvinnan binder med ring och märker/signar med helande tecken. Förvridne jätte och vrålande troll, far från dig, Oluv!”

3.4.4 Interpretation of Solberga plate 2

My transliteration of this plate agrees with Gustavson's (2017:90).

A: **pursikfahinprihufþahinmiramulþikafran ¶ manskunuhanatsaiþi**
 1 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55

B: **oipki ¶ sinhausuirtihaniloaumlipin**
 60 65 70 75 80 85

3.4.4.1 Runes 1–44 (rows A 1 and 2)

Plate 2 opens with **purs ik fa hin þrihufþa hin miramulþika fran ¶ mans kunu**, which is interpreted by Gustavson as *Purs ek fā hinn þríhofðaða, hinn meramulðiga frān manns kunu* 'I get the troll away, the three-headed, the earthy, from the man's woman'.²⁵⁸

Gustavson (2017:86) quotes the first part of verse 31 of *Skírnismál*, which describes the troll as three-headed (*með þursi þríhofðuðom*), and notes that the expression was presumably well-known in both East and West Scandinavia. The troll is named again in verse 36, but this time the rune *purs* is carved along with three other staves or symbols (*ergi ok æði ok óþola*) as part of a charm intended to compel Gerd to submit to Frey against her will. I quote these verses to show their similarity to the inscriptions on the Solberga plates:

*Með þursi þríhofðuðom
þú skalt æ nara
eða verlaus vera!
Þitt geð grípi,
þik morn morni!
Ver þú sem þistill,
sá er var þrunginn
í qnn ofanverða!*

With a three-headed giant you
shall miserably linger out your
life, or else be without a man!
May your mind be seized!
May pining waste you away!
Be like the thistle,
that which is crushed
at the end of the harvest!

*Purs ríst ek þér
ok þríá stafi,
ergi ok æði
ok óþola;
svá ek þat af ríst
sem ek þat á reist,
ef gqarask þarfar þess.*

'Giant' I carve on you
and three runes:
lewdness and frenzy
and unbearable desire;
thus I can rub that off,
as I carved that on,
if there is need of this.

C. Larrington's translation 1996.

The reason for *þríhofðaða* being spelt as **þrihufþa** is explained by Gustavson (2017:86) as follows:

²⁵⁸ 'Tursen får jag bort, den trehövdade, den jordiga, från mannens kvinna'.

[This] may be due to haplography or may reflect the loss of an unstressed vowel between similar consonants [...], less believable is that it is related to the same kind of word formation as for example in the name *Svarthqfði*.²⁵⁹

The most problematic word here is nonetheless **miramulṭika**. Gustavson believes that a reading of **t** for the uncertain rune is more likely than **l**, and I agree with him (see my comments in the catalogue, no 42). He therefore suggests that **mulṭika** may be interpreted as adj. **muldiḡr* and may be compared with an Old Swedish adjective which is reconstructed by Söderwall as **muldhoger* ‘dust-covered, dusty, dust-filled’.²⁶⁰ If the runic sequence instead reads **mulji-ka**, the adjective may have been formed with the suffix *liḡr*: **muldliḡr*. In both cases, the adjective is based on the noun *muld* f. ‘earth, topsoil’ and both entail formal difficulties although these can be resolved.²⁶¹ The first element may contain, according to Gustavson (2017:87) “a nominalised or adjectival formation based on a root form *mer-/mor-* [...] which occurs in the Icelandic verb *merja* (*marða*) ‘crush, pound, mash’ and in Swedish dialects in the words *mor* (*mår*) n. ‘pile of crushed things, waste, rubbish’ and *mora* ‘break apart, crush into small fragments or pieces’.”²⁶² The compound *meramuldiḡr* thus means ‘the one who is covered with crushed earth’.

The characterisation of the woman in the inscription by the expression **mans kunu** ‘the man’s woman’ signifies according to Gustavson (p. 87) “the human in contrast to the troll”.²⁶³ I am somewhat sceptical of this interpretation. Might it in fact indicate a different contrast: the legitimate status of the woman and the fact that the woman who will give birth is married?

²⁵⁹ “[Detta] kan bero på haplografi eller återspegla ett bortfall av en trycksvag vokal mellan lika konsonanter [...], mindre troligt är att det här rör sig om samma ordbildning som i t.ex. namnet *Svarthqfði*.”

²⁶⁰ ‘stofthöljd, dammig, neddammad’

²⁶¹ Gustavson (2017:86) writes: “Both interpretations give rise to formal difficulties, although hardly substantial ones [...]. In the first case, the vowel in the derivation is unusual. Normal would have been *u*, i.e. *mulduḡr*, since *muld* is a fem. *ō*-stem and *-uḡr* is the derivative which was generalised in the Old Scandinavian languages. Forms with *-iḡr* do occur there, however: Olcel. *auḡuḡr* (*-iḡr*), *rāḡuḡr* (*-iḡr*), *sauruḡr* (*-iḡr*), *ūruḡr* (*-iḡr*) and in some cases only forms with *-iḡr* occur. If we instead work with **muljika**, i.e. a runSw. adj. *muldliḡr*, the loss of consonant causes no concern [...], but the double-writing of *l* does, as it conflicts with the runographic principle of not double-writing long consonants. The carver may have had difficulty in reproducing the phonemic sequence /ldl/.” (“Båda tolkningarna medför formella svårigheter, däremot knappast betydelsemässiga [...]. I det förstnämnda fallet är vokalen i avledningen anmärkningsvärd. Det normala hade varit *u*, det vill säga *mulduḡr*, eftersom *muld* är en fem. *ō*-stam och *-uḡr* är den avledningsform som förallmänligades i de nordiska fornspråken. Former på *-iḡr* förekommer dock där: fornisl. *auḡuḡr* (*-iḡr*), *rāḡuḡr* (*-iḡr*), *sauruḡr* (*-iḡr*), *ūruḡr* (*-iḡr*) och i några fall uppträder endast former på *-iḡr*. Om vi i stället räknar med **muljika**, det vill säga ett runsvenskt adj. *muldliḡr*, bereder konsonantbortfallet inte något problem [...], men väl dubbelskrivningen av *l* som bryter mot den runografiska principen att inte dubbelteckna lång konsonant. Möjligen har ristaren haft svårighet att återge en fonemföljd /ldl/.”)

²⁶² “en substantivisk eller adjektivisk bildning till en rot *mer-/mor-* [...] som uppträder i det isländska verbet *merja* (*marða*) ‘krossa, stöta sönder, mosa’ och i svenska dialekter i orden *mor* (*mår*) n. ‘hög av sönderkrossade ting, avfall, skräp’ och *mora* ‘slå sönder, krossa i små smulor eller stycken’.”

²⁶³ “det mänskliga i motsats till tursen”

3.4.4.2 Runes 45–85 (rows A 2 and B 1–2)

The rest of the inscription still lacks a cohesive interpretation. The runic sequence 45–54 **hanatsaiþi** is interpreted by Gustavson (2017:87) as *hann at seiði* ‘(I) may enchant him there’ or ‘(I) may through sorcery get hold of him’. The sentence is constructed with the verb corresponding to OIcel. *seiða* in 1 pers. sg. pres. subj. with pers. pron. *hann* in acc. sg. and the preposition *at* in the spatial sense of ‘thither’ or in the adverbial sense of ‘in order to get hold of’. The latter sense for prep. *at* usually takes the dative case, however, and would require the dative form of pers. pron. *hann*. This proposal is thus untenable, although Gustavson’s interpretation is otherwise feasible. A suitable word must still be sought in the sequence **oipki**. The solution here may be to augment Gustavson’s proposal with a further verb: the runic sequence **ipki** may be interpreted as *iðki* 3 pers. sg. pres. subj. of *iðka*. The OIcel. verb *iðka* means ‘carry on with, do’ (*Norrøn ordbok*),²⁶⁴ but the prefix *ō-* gives it the opposite meaning to ‘do, accomplish, execute’, i.e. ‘destroy, frustrate, damage’.

The resultant sentence reads *Hann at seiði, ōiðki* ‘May (I) enchant him thither, destroy (him)’. The prefix *ō-* was very productive, forming new nouns, adjectives and verbs: many runic Scandinavian anthroponyms (most often by-names) employ it (Williams 1993:95 f). We encounter several verbs in Old West Scandinavian which employ the prefix to provide the opposite, negative sense: *úbirgja* ‘provide little help to someone as regards their basic needs, uncover’, *únýta* ‘make useless or unusable, cause something to be thrown away as unusable or invalid’, *úhægja* ‘make (someone) sorry, make (something) difficult for (someone), plague (someone)’, *únáða* ‘trouble, plague’, *úskygna* ‘darken, obscure the sight, make unclear’, *úróa* ‘disquiet, disturb the peace (of someone)’, *úþekkja* ‘make unpleasant, give an unpleasant appearance’ and many more (Fritzner och *Norrøn ordbok*).²⁶⁵ The noun *úverk* n. ‘misdeed, wrongdoing, bad deed’²⁶⁶ is nonetheless probably semantically closest. It thus seems possible to understand the verb OIcel. **ú-iðka*, runSw. **ō-iðka* as ‘commit a wrong, destroy’.

Gustavson proposes the interpretation *sinn hauss* ‘his head’ for **sinhaus** with poss. pron. *sinn* and the noun OWS *hauss*, OSw. *hös* m. ‘head, skull’. He believes (2017:88) that these words “could refer to the troll, which was earlier characterised as three-headed.”²⁶⁷

The conclusion is interpreted by Gustavson (with great reservation) as **uirti han i loa um lipin** *verði hann i lo(g)a um liðinn* ‘He disappears in the fire’ or ‘May he disappear in the fire’.²⁶⁸ The runic sequence **umlipin** is convincingly

²⁶⁴ ‘drive på med, gjere’

²⁶⁵ ‘gjøre en vanhjulpen med hensyn til sine fornødenheder, blotte’; ‘gjøre unyttig eller ubrugbar, ødelægge, bringe det dertil at noget forkastes som ubrugbart, ugyldigt’; ‘gjere (e-t) leitt, vanskelig for, plage (e-m)’; ‘besvære, plage’; ‘formørke, fordunkle synet, gjøre uklar’; ‘forurolige, forstyrre ens (e-n) fred’; ‘gjøre ubehagelig, give et ubehageligt udseende’

²⁶⁶ ‘ugjerning, misgjerning, slet gjerning’

²⁶⁷ “skulle kunna syfta på tursen, som tidigare karaktäriserats som trehövdad”

²⁶⁸ ‘Han blir i elden försvunnen’; ‘Må han försvinna i elden’.

interpreted as the past participle of *liða um* ‘go hence, go away, disappear’. The sequence **uirti** is interpreted as the verb *verða* ‘become’ in 3 pers. sg. pres. subj. This verb can be used with past part. to describe an action being carried out or having been carried out, and would thus fit into the construction with *um lipinn*. The **t**-rune representing /ð/ in **uirti** is, as Gustavson himself points out, problematic. While this representation is not entirely lacking in parallels, these are late and uncertain. A toponym on Ög 39 † has the second element *staðum* written as **statum**. This attestation has however disappeared, which decreases its reliability. There is a further lost attestation on Vs 17: the anthroponym *Tīðfrīð* is there spelt **tifrit**. Gustavson also draws attention to the unexplained form *verte* for the verb ‘bliva’ (*to become*) in New Norwegian and the pret. *vart* in Modern Swedish. It nevertheless seems advisable to attempt to find a better solution for the sequence **uirti**. I do not however wish to allow for miscarvings or runic transpositions, and instead suggest that the rule of three consonants (Lagman 1989:31) applies here and that a consonant has been omitted between the runes **r** and **t**. A possible solution would then be to identify a verb corresponding to OIcel. *virka* ‘pain’ (Fritzner),²⁶⁹ OSw. *virka* which in 3 pers. sg. pret. or pres. subj. is *virkti*. This verb could be written as **uirti** in pret. or pres. subj. due to the rule of three consonants. An example of this spelling can be found in the adjective *margr* ‘much’ which in n. acc. *margt* is written as **mart** on U 574.

Fritzner provides the following examples with the OIcel. verb *virka*: *sárit virkti hann mjök* ‘the wound hurt him a lot’, *virkir mik í hofuðit* ‘my head hurts’ and *hann virkti í hrygginn* ‘he had a sore back’. One can then regard *sinn haus* as accusative, and the pers. pron. *hann* becomes the subject of the clause. We thus obtain the phrase *Sinn haus virkti hann ī* which may be translated as ‘He had a headache’ or ‘He was tormented by pain in his head’.

The next problematic sequence is **loa**. According to Gustavson, the suggestion that the rune **g** or **h** is missing from the runic sequence to be understood as *loga* is unfeasible. There is nonetheless a possibility that the carver of the plate had an unusual realisation of /g/, e.g. as the voiced velar fricative [ɣ]. The rune **h** is used in the opening in the expression **þihi þas þigi þess** as well as in the adv. *nōg*. Did the carver have a weak realisation of the phoneme /g/?

Examples of missing **k**, **g** or **h**-runes in intervocalic position can be adduced: the name *Īgulfastr* occurs on U 52 and Sö 48 with the first element spelt **iul** and the name **iofast** on U 1069 corresponds to either *Īgulfastr* or *Hjalmfastr*. These examples are not however from Öland. A further possible but uncertain attestation is found on DR 39: **ī lai : ristæ :** ‘Lagi(?) carved’. My suggestion is thus to cautiously accept Gustavson’s interpretation of the runic sequence **iloa ī** *lo(g)a* with OSw. *logi* m. ‘flame, fire’.

The phrase *ī loga umliðinn* may thus be interpreted as ‘disappeared in the fire’ with the runic Swedish cognate of OIcel. past part. *umliðinn* which means

²⁶⁹ ‘smerte’

‘gone away’ of the verb *líða um* ‘go hence, go away, disappear, cease’ (Fritzner).²⁷⁰ This phrase may perhaps be understood as a complement to the preceding construction which functions as a kind of adverbial subordinate clause: ‘May he have a pain in his head (when it has) disappeared in the fire’. An example from Nygaard (1961:195), *eptir konung liðinn* ‘after the king’s death’, illustrates that the past participle can be used in this way as a kind of adverbial subordinate clause. It is also satisfying to have a concluding phrase which affirms that the three heads of the troll are now pained by sorcery and disappear in the fire.

3.4.4.3 Summary

The inscription on plate 2 has the following transliteration, normalisation and translation:

A: þurs ik fa hin þrihufþa hin miramulþika fran ¶ mans kunu han at saiþi
B: oipki ¶ sin haus uirti han i_ i loa umliþin

A: Þurs ek fā hinn þrihufðaða hinn meramuldiga frān manns kunu. Hann at seiði, ðiðki!

B: Sinn haus virkti hann ī, ī loga(?) umliðinn.

I carve (or: mark with signs) the three-headed troll, covered with crushed earth, from the man’s woman. May (I) enchant him there, destroy (him)! His head pained him (when it) disappeared into the fire(?).

This spell begins with a ritual phrase (‘I carve ...’) and continues with a phrase of banishment (‘May I enchant ...!’). The final phrase is either a banishment phrase which turns into an affirmation or else a complete affirmation. The spell may be considered either as a separate invocation, or comprise a development of the previous spell on Solberga plate 1 which concludes with a banishment phrase expelling a giant and a troll. It is then possible that this same troll is further characterised on plate 2 as three-headed and covered with crushed earth before being driven into the fire. Both of these variants are possible, although for reasons of textual philology I separate the formulas.

²⁷⁰ ‘gaa hen, gaa bort, forsvinde, ophøre’

4 Swedish runic plates with linguistic interpretations (type B and fragmentary)

× -...ms : **raþa** : **kan** : **furn** : **u...** **f-...**
... *rāða kann, forn o[rð](?)* ...
'... who can interpret ancient words (?) ...'
G 227

Our corpus currently comprises three B-type plates and two fragmentary plates from Swedish territory. While a further two B-type plates could be added to the corpus, it is unclear whether their inscriptions are composed in Latin or Runic Swedish, a problem which is discussed at the end of this chapter.

4.1 The Ulvsunda plate (U AST1;150), Uppland

4.1.1 Find circumstances and current condition of the plate

The plate was found in connection with archaeological excavations in Ulvsunda (Bromma township, city of Stockholm) in November 1939. The investigation (in the 'Magnetten' block, plot 10) was in relation to a large burial mound, 12 metres in diameter and 1.75 metres high. The excavation was led by Harry Thålin and the find was made in the grave itself (RAÄ 138). In the same grave were found more than two kilos of cremated bone, over 50 pearls, strap fittings, a bronze key, many rings, and pottery shards as well as fragments of game pieces and nails. All the objects from this grave are kept at SHM with the inventory number 22695 (the finds are described in the digital catalogue of the museum under this number). The mound has been dated to the early ninth century. Its placement was remarkable: located in an isolated position, it did not appear to directly belong to any graveyard or property.

Osteological analysis (Sten & Vretemark 2007) shows that the grave contained a selection of bones from the cremation of an adult human aged 25–40 as well as the cremated remains of a full-grown horse and at least two full-grown dogs. The sex of the deceased could not be established (p. 2): "The roof of the cranial cavity was heavy while for example the proximal joint of the radius as well as the bones of the metacarpus and metatarsus gave a more puny impression. The conclusion was that the sex could not be determined."²⁷¹ The

²⁷¹ "Skalltaken var kraftiga medan exempelvis strålbenets proximala led samt mellanhands- och mellanfotsbenen gav ett mer gracilt intryck. Slutsatsen blev att könet inte kunde bedömas."

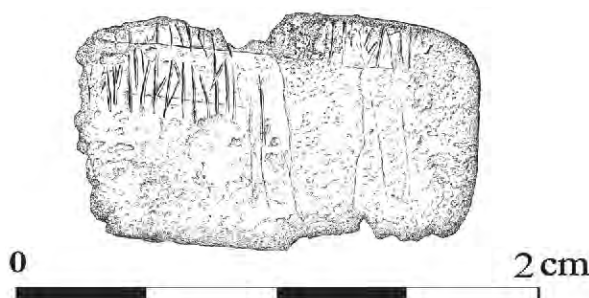


Figure 22. The Ulvsunda plate.
© Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath:
Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina,
based on examinations,
sketches and photographs by
the author.

large number of pearls as well as the key suggest a woman. On the other hand, the game pieces and strap fittings, if they comprised ornamentation for a belt, could be taken to indicate a man. Although burials of men usually contain weapons, these were not found in the grave.

The plate (Figure 22) is made of bronze. It is clear that it was laid in the grave after the cremation as it would otherwise have melted. This is the smallest of all the identified Viking-Age plates: 16.5 mm in length and 9.5 mm in height. On its discovery it was broken off at the left short side and damaged in the upper left corner (see Nordén's sketch and photographs in 1943, Pl. 2; these are also reproduced as figure 31.6 in the catalogue). When I rediscovered the plate in SHM's collection in 2008, I found remnants of adhesive on the runes and could confirm that the plate had broken into three parts at some stage. It is unclear when this might have occurred; presumably after Nordén's examination but before the plate was lost in the SHM collections around 1985. The three pieces of the plate had been glued together, and small parts of the upper left corner and lower right corner were completely missing. The gluing was not carried out professionally, and parts of the upper row of the inscription are now covered with glue, which markedly complicates the reading of the runes (see figure 31.1 in the catalogue).

The left short side of the plate is, as mentioned above, broken off. The other short side has rounded corners. The shape of the edges leads however to the suspicion that the plate is missing only a few millimetres of the broken short side and is thus almost intact. The surface of the plate is somewhat dented.

4.1.2 Nordén's transliteration and a new transliteration

The height of the runes is c. 2–3 mm. Only the obverse of the plate bears an inscription and this comprises two rows. The inscription was first investigated by Otto von Friesen in 1940. He sketched the runes but offered no transliteration (1918–[1942]: Notebook IX, p. 269 [UUB NC 526:1]; see its reproduction in figure 31.5 in the catalogue).

Arthur Nordén investigated the inscription three years later, in 1943. His reading, normalisation (into Old Icelandic) and translation are as follows (1943:150, 152):

u-ṣ--uruakrūtimisfulkīr || ¶ fakiskapiua || ¶ uuṛ

vesat-tu órvakr úti, misfylgir! fangi skaði vá!

Do not be too lively outside the grave, revenant! May the evil-doer get bad luck!²⁷²

Nordén (p. 152) also offers another, freer translation of the inscription:

Do not venture out of the burial mound! If you nonetheless do this: may the spell strike you dead!²⁷³

Despite all of my critical remarks on this transliteration, which are recorded in the catalogue (no 31), Nordén's reading is impressively precise and detailed. One must admire his ability to distinguish the runes of the inscription, which are small and difficult to read, particularly as he had no access to a stereomicroscope but was restricted to a standard model. I have examined the plate four times using a stereomicroscope and would like to have made a further examination. I transliterate the Ulvsunda plate as follows:

A: ...ṽṛ--... ṽ-misbuṭk... ¶ [f]akiskapiua ||

My reading undermines the central word in Nordén's interpretation, namely the basis for the reconstructed OWS word **misfylgir* m. 'revenant', an agent noun formed from an assumed but unattested verb corresponding to OIcel. **misfylgja*.

4.1.3 Nordén's interpretation and new suggestions for interpretation

Nordén suggested that the inscription was addressed to a revenant. His free translation is required to explain the strange formulation of the spell: 'do not be too lively outside the grave'. I can however offer no better solution for this part, since it is damaged and the runes are in fact lost. The problem with the word **misfylgir* includes not only the fact that the final two runes, **ir**, cannot be confirmed (see my comments in the catalogue), but also the meaning the word is assigned by Nordén. He writes that Fritzner lists the noun *misfylgi* n. only in its legal sense 'overriding inclination to support one of two parties in a dispute'.²⁷⁴ This must however, according to Nordén, be a secondary sense, and the primary meaning 'to join in improper fellowship'.

It is not entirely easy to understand exactly what Nordén (1943:151) means. If he is suggesting that the meaning of the word **misfylgir* was 'improper follower', i.e. 'non-human follower', I am unable to agree with him. It seems problematic to assign the prefix *mis-* ('improper, false') the transferred sense

²⁷² "[V]ar icke alltför livlig utanför graven, gengångare! Må skadegöraren få olycka!"

²⁷³ "[B]egiv dig ej ut ur gravhögen! Och om du ändå gör det: må besvärjelsen lägga dig död!"

²⁷⁴ 'overveiende tilbøielighed til at understøtte den ene af to tvistende parter'

of ‘non-human’ as it is used almost exclusively to form words of a legal character.²⁷⁵

Instead of **misfulk**, the runic sequence can be read as **misþuþk**.... A possible and fairly obvious interpretation of **misþuþ** is **misbōt* f. ‘improper offer, false help’. The word *bōt* f. is attested in mediaeval as well as runic Swedish, e.g. in **butrunar** on the Skänninge plate. *Misbót/misbōt* f. is not attested in Old Icelandic or Old Swedish, but it seems that it could have been a possible name for a wrongful remedy, such as is described, for example, in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (chap. 72). There Egil is asked to help a sick and bedridden girl whose condition has begun to deteriorate after a neighbour tried to cure her by carving runes. Egil asks that she be lifted from her bed and the bedclothes changed; he examines her bed and there finds a whalebone with runes. He scrapes the runes away, burns these and the bone and ensures the bedclothes are aired. He then composes his famous verse proclaiming that those who do not understand runes should not carve them.

It is unclear how the following rune **k** should be interpreted, but it might be suggested that it could be the pers. pron. *ek* used enclitically. The interpretation is uncertain, however, since the enclitic *’k* usually occurs after verbs rather than nouns. Moreover, we do not know what followed the **k**-rune.

The preserved part of the inscription, **-aḱiskapiua**, is interpreted by Nordén (1943:151) as *fangi skaði vá*. Nordén regards **skapi** as the OIcel. noun *skaði* m., OSw. *skap* m. ‘evil-doer, fiend’ and **ua** as OIcel. *vá* f., OSw. *vā* f. ‘harm, accident, pain, danger’. He interprets the runic sequence **[f]aki** as *fangi*, pres. subj. of a verb corresponding to OIcel. *fá* v. ‘seize, catch, get’. Nordén (p. 151) writes that the two forms *fái* and *fangi* occur in the pres. subj. in Old Icelandic:

It is true that the later form *[fangi]* is attested late (in Bible revisions from the first half of the thirteenth century [...]), but everything indicates that the form *fangi* has old roots. Within the paradigm, the *-n-* is supported by forms such as the consistent *-n-* of the imperf. subj., *fengom* of the imperf. ind., *fenginn* of the perf. part [...]. Outside the paradigm, the noun *fang* retains awareness of the root’s original *-n-*, and a pres. subj.-formation *fangi* in the ninth century does not to me appear to necessitate any great reservations.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Fritzner lists words such as *misganga* f. ‘wrongful entry, that someone goes where he [or she] should not go’ (‘utilbørlig gang, at nogen gaar der hvor han ikke skulde gaa’), *misdæma* v. ‘judge someone with an unjust, partisan judgement’ (‘dømme nogen med en uretfærdig, partisk dom’) or *misferð* f. ‘improper conduct or practice’ (‘urigtig adfærd eller fremgangsmaade’). The prefix is sometimes used in the sense of ‘dangerous’ or ‘different’, as is understandable since damage or differences often result from improper acts. As examples may be offered words such as *misfall* n. ‘accident, misfortune’ (‘uheld, ulykke’), *misfara* v. ‘treat badly, damage’ (‘fare ilde, tage skade’) and *misskipta* v. ‘divide unequally, so that each share or part is not as large or good’ (‘dele ulige, saa at ikke hers lod, del bliver lige stor eller god’).

²⁷⁶ “Den senare formen *[fangi]* är visserligen sent belagd (i bibelbearbetningar från förra hälften av 1200-t. [...]), men allt talar för, att formen *fangi* har gammal hävd. Inom paradigmets stödes *-n-* et av former såsom imperf. konj:s genomgående *-n-*, imperf. ind:s *fengom*, perf. part:s *fenginn* [...]. Utanför paradigmets håller subst. *fang* rotens ursprungliga *-n-* levande i medvetandet, och en pres. konj.-bildning på 800-talet *fangi* synes mig därför icke behöva väcka några större betänkligheter.”

There is however a serious objection to Nordén's interpretation, namely that in a ninth-century runic inscription one would expect *fangi* to be written with an *os*-rune. It is nonetheless possible to suggest alternative interpretations of this runic sequence, which could in turn be connected with the previous word *misbōt*. One may for example interpret [f]a as 1 pers. sg. pres. ind. *fæ* of the runSw. verb *fā* 'get, bring, obtain' and arrive at the meaning *misbōt'k fæ* 'I get/bring a wrongful remedy'. The remainder can be interpreted as a further sentence *Ekki skaði vā!* 'May the misfortune harm nothing! (or not harm anything)' with the OSw. verb *skapa* 'harm' in 3 pers. sg. pres. subj. and the pron. *ækki* 'nothing' as well as the noun *vā* f. 'harm, damage, accident' in nom. sg. It ought to be observed however that the Olcel. verb *skaða* 'harm' is, according to Fritzner, used impersonally with negation (at the end of the fourteenth century): "only impers. with a negation; *skaðar e-n ekki* i.e. one has no harm (from something)." ²⁷⁷

If this interpretation of the second part of the inscription is correct, it means that its first part ought to be interpreted as 'I get a wrongful remedy' rather than as 'I bring a wrongful remedy'. One might then imagine that the owner of the plate realised that he or she would be given a wrongful remedy and prepared for this with a spell to ward off such dangers. We can unfortunately not confirm whether my suggested interpretation is correct as the losses in the inscription are too great to be able to safely establish the context. For the same reason it is not possible to determine the nature of the spell. It may have been an exhortative magical formula, but this cannot be proved today.

4.2 The Järfälla plate (U Fv1969;210), Uppland

4.2.1 Find circumstances and current condition of the plate

A copper plate in a leather case was found in 1962 in connection with the investigation of cemetery RAÄ 29b east of Veddesta farm in Järfälla parish. The investigation was led by Sven-Erik Pousette. The plate was discovered in an oval stone setting (phase no 6) which also contained half a pearl of molten glass, fragments of pottery and wooden remains (Pousette 1962). It is interesting to observe that the stone setting did not contain bone remains, which may indicate some form of symbolic burial. A fragment of an Anglo-Saxon coin struck in Lincoln (probably under Ethelred II, see SHM:27291:3) was found in a round stone setting in the same cemetery, which according to Pousette and Helmer Gustavson dates the runic plate to around 1000. The coin was found in another grave, however, and a secure archaeological dating of the plate is thus lacking. The object is now kept at SHM, where it has inventory number 27291:6.

²⁷⁷ "kun upers. med en negtelse; *skaðar e-n ekki* dvs. en har ingen skade (af noget)"

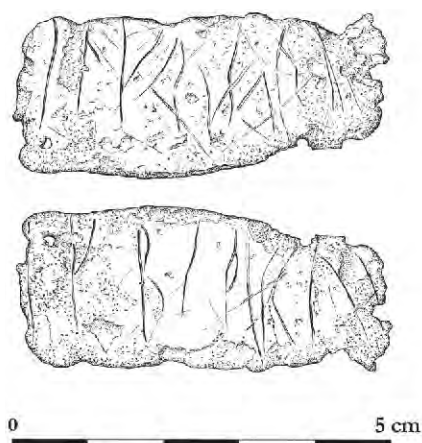


Figure 23. The Järfälla plate. © Sofia Pereswettoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

The plate (Figure 23) is very thin and fragile. Its length is 47 mm, its width 22 mm and thickness c. 0.2 mm. Small flakes have been lost from the surface, particularly near the edges on the reverse. The surface is nevertheless relatively well-preserved thanks to the leather case in which the plate was found. It is interesting to note that the case was meant for this particular plate, into which, to judge from the imprint in the case, it was sewn. One of the long sides of the case has sewing holes, and one of the short sides is cut off, indicating that it was open here. The inscription was thus presumably not intended to be seen, although the plate could be retrieved from the casing. The case had a small strap which probably enabled it to be fastened to a belt.

4.2.2 Earlier transliteration and interpretation of the inscription

The inscription was read by Helmer Gustavson (1969:210) six years after the find was made:

A: *ilfusun*

B: *ibiprua*

Gustavson proposes two alternative possibilities for interpretation. He provides no normalisations of these but uses Old Swedish forms of the words (without marking vowel length) when he discusses the inscription. I have thus reconstructed normalisations on the basis of his wordforms. One suggestion is: *Illfuss uni. Bīpr va*. Gustavson provides no translation but summarises his reasoning as follows: “The content of the inscription could then be a wish that no malevolent being would act with evil intentions and that it would be destroyed if this occurred.”²⁷⁸ If one nevertheless attempts to provide a translation of this

²⁷⁸ “Innebörden i inskriften skulle då kunna vara en önskan att inte någon illvillig skall uppträda i skadligt uppsåt och att han må fördärvas om så sker.”

first suggestion, it could possibly be formulated as: ‘May the ill-intentioned calm himself. [I] invoke ruin [for him].’ The second alternative (*Illfuss. Un(n)i biþr va*) is translated as ‘Ill-intentioned. Un(n)e invokes ruin (for you).’ Gustavson obviously believes that the second alternative is the more probable but he remains cautious of his own interpretation since there is no attestation of the anthroponym *Illfuss* (despite the first and the second element occurring in other runic Swedish names.) He also points out that attestations of the word *va* f. ‘harm, misfortune’ are late and rare in Old Swedish, and that it is controversial whether the word is attested at all in runic Swedish.

I consider it dubious that the verb *biðia* could mean ‘invoke’, as in Gustavson’s suggestions for interpretation. The verb is used in Viking-Age runic inscriptions with the sense ‘entreat, implore, order’. A further somewhat surprising minor detail is that the name *Un(n)i* in Gustavson’s second suggestion is divided such that the two first runes are found on side A, while the final rune ends up on side B. This seems counterintuitive, and we have no comparable examples of names being segmented on separate sides of the same plate.

4.2.3 New transliteration and suggestions for interpretation

I examined the plate twice: in November 2008 and December 2010. The overall impression of the inscription is that the carved lines are not straight but have a curvy character: thus the branches of the **f**-runes and the mainstave of the **r**-runes (see figures 23.2 and 23.7 in the catalogue) evidence an unusual shape. With the use of a stereomicroscope with good magnification, one notices that the plate is covered by a kind of lattice consisting of very thin and faintly carved lines (see figure 23.9 in the catalogue, drawing by the author). These lines appear from all evidence to be deliberately carved, but they are almost always fainter than the lines of the runes, except on side A at the right short side of the plate. Gustavson does not comment on these lines. It is possible that his microscope did not allow the magnification required to make the latticework visible.

The purpose of this lattice is unclear. It may have been a way of concealing the content of the inscription from unpractised eyes. One may well wonder why one would attempt to hide an inscription already protected by a case and thus invisible, regardless of the reader’s experience. Might it be that the reason for the latticework was symbolic rather than practical?

My reading of the runes deviates at some points from Gustavson’s, which I discuss at length in the catalogue (no 23). I transliterate the entire inscription as follows:

A: *ilfusrūn*
B: *ikbiþirua*

We can be certain of the word *illfūss* on side A. The adjective *illfūss* is attested in Old Icelandic with the meaning ‘full of evil, with the desire to hurt’

(Fritzner).²⁷⁹ In runic Swedish, the first element *ill-* and the second element *fūs* occur in anthroponyms (Peterson 2007:135 resp. 72). The runic sequence **rñu** or **rñ** contains an uncertain rune **u**, but we can be sure of the two other runes therein. I therefore suggest an interpretation *rñ* f. ‘rune, secret sign’. We can consequently identify a compound noun *illfūsrun* f. on side A. I will return later to the meaning of this compound.

On side B, I interpret **ik** as pers. pron. *ek* ‘I’. The runic sequence **bip** can then be interpreted as OSw. *bipia* v. ‘entreat, ask, offer, command’ in 1 pers. sg. pres. The meaning ‘command’ is attested in runic Swedish: an early tenth-century runestone from Björkö, Adelsö parish (U 4), reads *Döttir bað gærva kumbl þetta aft Iūta* ‘Dotter ordered this memorial to be made in memory of Jute’. Two of Öpir’s late runestones have the signature **baþ ybir rista** ‘(NN) ordered Öpir to carve (these runes)’ (U 544, U 1100).

The runic sequence **pik** can then in its turn be interpreted as pers. pron. in 2 pers. dat. sg. *pēr* ‘you’. In *Norrøn ordbok* we find the verb *biðja e-n e-s* means ‘ask someone for something’²⁸⁰ and *biðja e-t* ‘ask for something (*e-m*, to or for someone/something/oneself)’.²⁸¹ Söderwall provides examples of the verb *bipia* with the dative and infinitive: *badh fiskarens hwstru sinom man sighia sik hwar han haffde fangit the peninggana* ‘the fisherman’s wife ordered her husband to say where he had got the money from’.²⁸² It is therefore tempting to interpret **uq** as corresponding to an OIcel. verb *vá* ‘blame someone for something, criticise someone for something’²⁸³ (Fritzner). One then arrives at the meaning *illfūsrun*, *ik bið pēr vā* ‘Malevolent rune, I order you to blame [him/her/them]’. One might also interpret **uq** as corresponding to an OIcel. noun *vá* ‘harm, misfortune, danger’²⁸⁴ (Fritzner) and arrive at ‘Malevolent rune, I ask you for harm/I ask for harm for you’, which is perhaps the more likely interpretation.

As regards the compound *illfūsrun*, we find several similar compounds actually on runic plates: obvious parallels include *bōtrūnar* and *lǫfrūnar* on the Skänninge plate (see also p. 310 ff. on other compounds with the second element *-rūnar*). It is nonetheless unusual in this instance that the second element is in the singular. It is however also possible that the compound *mōðrūnar* on the Ladoga plate occurs in gen. sg. A further example may be found on Klinta plate 1 where the word *rūn* is presumably in nom. sg. There seem to be no other Viking-Age runic attestations beyond these three of this word in the singular; all of these are somewhat uncertain but not impossible.²⁸⁵ There are however a couple of Proto-Norse attestations: on the Noleby stone (Vg 63) and the Einang

²⁷⁹ ‘ondskabsfuld, som har lyst til at skade’

²⁸⁰ ‘be ein om noko’

²⁸¹ ‘be om noko (*e-m*, til el. for ein)’

²⁸² ‘fiskarens hustru bad/uppmade sin man att säga var han hade fått pengarna ifrån’

²⁸³ ‘lægge en noget til last, dadle en for noget’

²⁸⁴ ‘skade, olykke, fare’

²⁸⁵ An attestation on G 54B can be discounted thanks to a new interpretation by Källström (Run-råd 66, 22 January 2015).

stone (N KJ63). Marstrander (1952:211 f.) interprets *rūnō* on the Noleby stone as the collective concept ‘runic mystery’, while Grønvik (1987:98 f., 108) believes that the singular form of the word *rūn* f. had a different meaning to the plural, referring to the written content rather than to the sign itself. He translates (p. 108) ‘secret formula (of magico-religious content)’²⁸⁶ for the stones from Noleby and Einang and further suggests that this is the original meaning of the word. If this is accepted, the *illfūs rūn* of the inscription could be translated as an adjective plus noun rather than a compound noun: ‘harmful/malevolent knowledge/secret’. This interpretation seems more credible for the simple reason that we lack compounds formed with *-rūn(ar)/-rúnar* appended to adjectives: all the examples known seem to have nominal first elements. If correct, this sentence can also be interpreted as a caption for the following sentence: ‘Malevolent secret: I ask for harm for you/I ask you for harm.’ Such captions do occur in magical formulas, and the closest parallel in the relevant material is *Viðr aðravari* ‘Against poisoning of the blood’ in the Canterbury formula (E DR419).

The magic formula can be grouped with the exhortative formulas.

4.3 The Högstena plate (Vg 216), Västergötland

4.3.1 Find circumstances and present condition of the plate

A bronze plate with a runic inscription was found in 1920 in the northern area of Högstena churchyard. The plate was in two pieces: one 71 mm long and 20 mm wide and the other 17 mm long and 19 mm wide. The find of the first, larger piece was made during the excavation of a grave; the second was discovered when the grave was filled in. The discoverer of the plate, J. E. Andersson, unfortunately did not record his observations on the original placement of the plate. All that is known for certain is that it was in the ground of a churchyard, 13 metres directly north of the north-east corner of the church choir, which is consistent with its being placed in or close to a grave. It is unfortunately impossible to determine whether such a grave was Christian, as Nordén believes (1943:177), although this is indicated by its location in a churchyard. The object was passed to SHM where it has inventory number 16449.

The plate (Figure 24) is in total 88 mm long, 19–20.5 mm wide and c. 1.3 mm thick. It was broken into two pieces long ago. Nordén (1943:176) suggests that the plate “has, probably already on its burial, been folded at one end and has now broken apart in the fold crease”.²⁸⁷ How such “folding” should be understood is unclear. The plate does not resemble the folded or rolled mediaeval runic plates, which are most often made of lead and contain Latin texts. These

²⁸⁶ ‘hemmelig formular (av magisk-religiöst innehåll)’

²⁸⁷ “har, sannolikt redan vid nedläggandet, omböjts i ena änden och är nu sönderbrustet i vikiningsvecket”

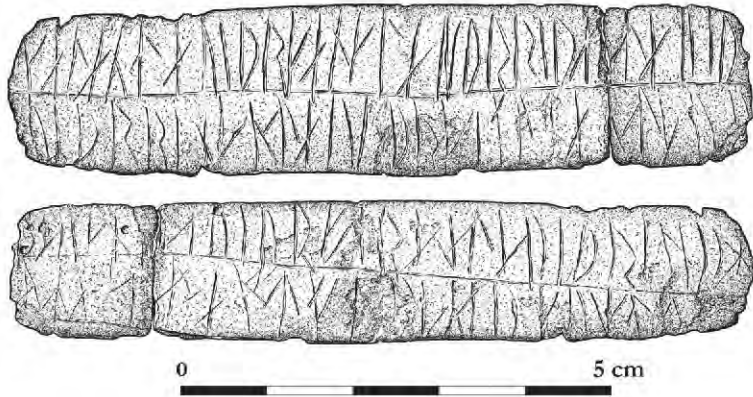


Figure 24. The Högstena plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

plates are moreover usually folded in the middle or from both ends. It is therefore difficult to believe that the Högstena plate was folded deliberately, even if this cannot be discounted. Indicative of this having occurred unintentionally is that the metal may have been weakened by two mainstaves on the front and back sides occurring in the same place (runes 52 and 90). The Högstena plate and its inscription are preserved in their entirety.

4.3.2 Earlier readings and interpretations

The inscription currently has two published interpretations, one by Hugo Jungner (1936) and the other by Elisabeth Svärdström (1967, *SRI* 5:396). A suggested interpretation of the words of the inscription has also been given by Jan Paul Strid (1994). The first attempt at reading the runes was by Otto von Friesen (1920: Notebook IV, p. 30 [UUB 526:1]; see figure 35.11 in the catalogue); this however comprised only a sketch and comments in the scholar's notebook. The next attempt was made by Erik Brate, who inspected the inscription in 1922. His reading, which is preserved in manuscript form, was carefully presented by Svärdström in *SRI* (5:398). Although Brate did not manage to produce a conclusive reading or sustained interpretation, it is interesting that he suggests that the inscription contains the names of remedies for diverse illnesses, as well as the names of the illnesses themselves, e.g. OSw. *riþa* f. 'fever, ague'.²⁸⁸

Jungner suggests that the spell is aimed at a revenant or possibly the ghost of a dead criminal. His transliteration (1936:282), with word boundaries introduced by me to facilitate reading, normalisation into Old Swedish (p. 286) and translation are:

²⁸⁸ This suggestion was made before the finding of Sigtuna plate 1 with its *sārriða*, and was thus not influenced by Lindquist's interpretation.

A: 1 kalanda uiþr kankla uiþr riþanda uiþ

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

2 uiþr rinanda uiþr siþianda uiþ

35 40 45 50 55

B: 1 r sikn(ānd)ā uiþr fāraṇda uiþr fliuh

60 65 70 75 80 85

2 ānþa s(k)āl alt fuþaṇa uk um duia

90 95 100 105 108

[Gal]

*viþ galanda,
viþr ganganda,
viþr riþanda,
viþr rinnanda,
viþr sætianda,
viþr sighlanda,
viþr fāraṇda,
viþr fliughanda;
skal alt fuþ anna
ok um dōia.*

[I incant]

against the enchanting one,
against the walking one,
against the riding one,
against the running one,
against the one setting snares,
against the sailing one,
against the travelling one,
against the flying one;
The scoundrel will be all gone and
as a result (of the enchantment) die.²⁸⁹

The reading of Svärðström diverges from that of Jungner on only two points: she reads rune 87 as **d** and assumes rune 97 to have been ⟨**r**⟩. She is however much more careful in her transliteration and marks ten runes as unidentified. Like Jungner, Svärðström suggests that the inscription is a spell against a revenant.

I reproduce her reading from *Västergötlands runinskrifter* (SRI 5:396), which is even more cautious than the version in *Fornvännen* (1967:16). Here I also mark word boundaries to simplify reading. Her transliteration, normalisation to runic Swedish and translation are as follows:

A: 1 kal anda uiþr kankla uiþr riþanda uiþ

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

2 uiþr rinanda uiþr s--ianda uiþ

35 40 45 50 55

B: 1 r sikn--a uiþr f--raṇda uiþr fliuh

60 65 70 75 80 85

2 ānþa s-- alþ fu--na uk um du-a

90 95 100 105 108

*Gal anda viðr, gangla viðr, riðanda við(r), viðr rinnanda, viðr s[it]ianda,
viðr sign[and]a, viðr f[a]randa, viðr fliughanda. S[kal] alt fy[r]na ok um
dø[i]a.*

²⁸⁹ “[Jag galdrar] / mot den galdrande, / mot den gångande, / mot den ridande, / mot den rännande, / mot den försåt sättande, / mot den seglande, / mot den farande, / mot den flygande; / uslingen skall allt ge sig av och till åtföljd (av galdern) dö.”

I incant against the spirit, against (the spirit) who is inclined to walk, against the riding one, against the running one, against the sitting one, against the sinking one, against the travelling one, against the flying one. Everything will lose its vitality and die.²⁹⁰

Strid (1994) allies himself with Jungner's interpretation of the inscription, above all its introduction, but believes that the words are aimed at a living person. He does interpret one of the words differently, namely the runic sequence **sikn(ānd)α**, which he understands as *signande* 'the one who makes the sign of the cross, the one who pronounces spells'.

Svärdström and Jungner both discuss Jungner's interpretation at length; Strid (1994:303–307) also discusses the interpretations of both Jungner and Svärdström. For this reason I will focus solely on the problematic areas which still lack an explanation or solution.

The following methodical problems can be observed in Jungner's interpretation: he double-reads three runes in the introduction to obtain the word *gal*, and moves the word *viþr* towards the beginning of the inscription. He also presupposes two miscarvings in the runic sequences **kankla** and **sikn--α**, which he interprets as *ganganda* 'walking' and *sighlanda* 'sailing' respectively. Thus according to Jungner the runic sequence **kankla** is carved in place of expected ***kankanda**. It is however unlikely that the carver would have committed such a great error as to carve two runes instead of four, and only one of these correctly, namely the rune **α**. The interpretation of **sikn--α** as *sighlanda* is also problematic, since Jungner assumes that the carver erroneously produced an **n**-rune instead of an **l**. The carver's **n**-runes are however clearly distinct from his **l**-runes, as the branches of the former inevitably reach the framing or edging lines, except in one further assumed case, namely in the runic sequence (1–7) **kankla**, which however can be assigned a different reading (see my report on the reading in the catalogue, no 35). I also wish to discuss Jungner's interpretation (1936:293) of the runic sequence **siþianda** as *sætianda* 'the one setting snares' instead of the expected *sitianda* 'the one sitting'. This suggestion seems to be inspired by his own assumption that the verbs found in the inscription must exclusively be present participles of verbs of movement.

Jungner's interpretation (p. 300) of the word *fup* as a term of abuse for a revenant 'scoundrel, wretch, carcass'²⁹¹ is not appealing, albeit possible. Although he provides an example of a revenant being verbally abused (Saga of Hromund Greipsson), he is aware (p. 300) that his suggestion for the concluding phrase is "reasonable but by no means certain".²⁹²

Svärdström's (1967:17) solution for the beginning of the inscription, initially suggested by Otto von Friesen – *gal anda viðr* – is appealing. Here one is

²⁹⁰ "Jag galdrar mot anden, mot den (ande) som är benägen att gå, mot den ridande, mot den rännande, mot den sittande, mot den segnande, mot den farande, mot den flygande. Allt skall förlora sin livskraft och dö."

²⁹¹ 'usling, kräk, as'

²⁹² "rimligt men ingalunda säkert"

neither required to double-read the runes in the introduction to identify the word *gal* nor to move the preposition *viðr*. Her interpretation of the runic sequence **kankla** as an Old Swedish adjective **gangull* in m. acc. sg. weak declension *ganga* ‘the one who is inclined to walk, walker’ is also a great improvement on Jungner’s assumption of a large-scale miscarving. Strid (1994: 304) nevertheless maintains that Svärðström’s interpretation “from a methodical point of view shows hardly any advantage over Jungner’s assumption of a miscarving.”²⁹³ I disagree with Strid here and will discuss the matter below.

Svärðström also operates with a carving error: the runic sequence **fu(r)a-na** is given the interpretation *fyrna* ‘dry out from age, wither’ with a superfluous **a**-rune (or **fu(ri)na** with a superfluous **i**-rune). Svärðström suggests that this might be due to the carver’s “tentative analysis of sounds”,²⁹⁴ which is of course possible. The entire concluding phrase ‘everything will lose its vitality and die’ is however surprisingly far-reaching. In this context I would also like to draw attention to a freer translation by Svärðström (see 1967:19 or *SRI* 5: 396), where she reformulates two parts of her interpretation. The introductory phrase “I incant against the spirit, against (the spirit) who is inclined to walk” is here changed to “I direct my spell against the spirit of the deceased, against the revenant”,²⁹⁵ and the concluding phrase “Everything will lose its vitality and die” to “In all its forms the ghost will wither and die”.²⁹⁶ These changes create a completely different impression of the spell. I consider there to be a great difference between expressing a desire for everything to die and one that only a ghost in all its forms should die. This need for a freer translation to diminish the effect of the remarkable introductory formulation and the dramatic conclusion indicates that the interpretation of these two parts of the inscription could be improved upon.

Strid (1994:304) accepts Jungner’s assumption of a miscarving in the runic sequence **kankla**. He regards (p. 305) Svärðström’s introduction *gal anda viðr* ‘I incant against the spirit’ as unreasonable, since the word *andi* m. cannot designate ‘revenant’ in Old Swedish. Svärðström (1967:17) is aware of this problem and notes that the word is used here “in its general sense of ‘spirit, spirit creature’”.²⁹⁷ Strid (1994:305) however considers that Svärðström “in her attempt to bypass this difficulty [...] overlooks the fact that this meaning belongs to the same sphere as ‘revenant, ghost’ and is thus late.”²⁹⁸ Strid further observes that the meaning ‘spirit, spirit creature’ for the word *andi* is not attested in mediaeval times, and that the Christian missionaries’ word *andi* was used exclusively for human souls, not for riding or flying ghosts. I cannot agree with

²⁹³ “från metodisk synpunkt har [Svärðströms tolkning] knappast något försteg framför Jungners antagande om en felristning.”

²⁹⁴ “trevande ljudanalys”

²⁹⁵ “Jag riktar min besvärjelse mot den dödes ande, mot gengångaren.”

²⁹⁶ “I alla skepnader skall spöket förlora sin livskraft och dö.”

²⁹⁷ “i sin allmänna betydelse ‘ande, andeväsen’”

²⁹⁸ “i sitt försök att kringgå denna svårighet [...] förbiser att denna innebörd hör hemma i samma sfär som ‘gengångare, spöke’ och alltså är sen”

Strid that the meaning ‘spirit creature, unclean spirit’ for the OSw. word *andi m.* must be so late. While there is no doubt that this meaning must have arrived with Christian terminology, this occurred relatively early, as shown by at least two good examples.²⁹⁹

We can in summary state that there are several problematic areas: the introductory rr. 1–7 **kalanda**, the runic sequence 12–17 **kankla**, a word pair in the middle 47–54 **s--ianda** and 59–65 **sikn--a** as well as the entire concluding phrase. I wish initially to investigate the reading of these sections.

4.3.3 New transliteration

When I attempted my first investigation of the Högstena plate in November 2008, the object was mounted on a plastic panel. The reverse of the plate could not be seen and it was also difficult to examine the obverse. On my second and third investigations (in January 2012 and April 2013), the panel had been removed and I could investigate both sides.

The immediate impression on first seeing the Högstena plate is that the runes were carved in a very free or rather careless manner, as though the carver did not care about their appearance. Otto von Friesen as well as Jungner (1936:280) believe that the plate was carved in the dark. Svärdström (*SRI* 5:395) categorically denies this: “The explanation defies reason. The carver could not have completed a largely legible inscription of 108 tightly compressed runes on this little plate without access to light.”³⁰⁰ I agree with Svärdström and provide a further indication that the inscription was carved with some source of light available, namely that the runes are distinguished not only by the direction of the branches but also by their length. It would have been difficult to carve the **n**-rune, for example, with a branch reaching the base line, without access to

²⁹⁹ There are several examples in Old Icelandic which show that the word *andi m.* could designate ‘spirit creature’ or ‘bad spirit, unclean spirit’. While many of these examples (see *ONP* for the word *andi*) are obviously translations from Latin, there are also two attestations in original texts. The first is from *Saga Óláfs Tryggvasonar af Oddr Snorrason munk*, a translation which is dated to the early thirteenth century and is preserved in manuscripts from c. 1250–1275 (see *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* 1992:455): *Finnar colluðu þa til hofþingia þeira anda. er loptit byggia. fyrir þui at iafn fullt er loptit af uhreinum andum. sem iorðin* ‘Finns [Sami people] then called on the leader of the spirits who live in the air, since the air is just as full of unclean spirits as the earth’. The second example is from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, which is dated to the fourteenth century (*Íslensk bókmenntasaga* 1992:366): *þa þotti konvngi einn alfr edr andi koma inn j hvsít ok þo at lvtvm dyrvm* ‘then it seemed to the king that an elf or a spirit came into the house through locked doors’. Fritzner also notes the meaning ‘spirit, spirit creature’ for the word *andi*. Strid is correct that the word *andi m.* began to be used by the missionaries in the sense of ‘soul’ to describe Christian souls. The word *andi* is however an old Germanic word meaning ‘spirit’ which was taken over by Christian missionaries for their own purposes. The word must have had a range of other meanings which were so close to ‘spirit, spirit creature’ that the new, borrowed meaning could be applied to it. Strid’s reasoning thus does not disallow the understanding of the word *andi* as ‘spirit, spirit creature’ during the end of the Viking period.

³⁰⁰ “Förklaringen faller på sin egen orimlighet. Ristaren kan icke på det lilla blecket ha åstadkommit en till största delen läsbar inskrift av 108 tätt sammanträngda runor utan tillgång till ljus.”

light. I therefore do not agree with Jungner (1936:303), who considers that “the same runic sign has been carved quite differently in different places.”³⁰¹ Actually, the case is almost the reverse: the runic sign shares the same set of characteristic features, although these are not the normal ones. The careless appearance of the runes is in my opinion a deliberate strategy and perhaps a means of making the reading of the inscription more difficult for an untrained eye. The runes which here comprise graphic minimal pairs are not typical in regard to other inscriptions. Thus for example the runes **n** and **l** constitute a pair: they are not separated by the direction and placement of the branch at the top for the **l**-rune and the middle of the mainstave for the **n**-rune, but by the length of the branch. The branch of the **n**-rune always reaches the base line (except in one apparent case, in the runic sequence **kankla**, for which reason it also seems reasonable that the rune could here be read as **l**). Nor are the runes **a** and **k** separated by their direction, but by the branch of the **a**-rune crossing the mainstave, which the branch of the **k**-rune does not. The branches of a number of **a**-runes descend on the left, but they ascend to the right in a few. The runes **u** and **p** also comprise a pair: the bow of the **p**-rune is closed while the bow of the **u**-rune, which is just as long, is open at the bottom. The rune **t**, like **l**, has an unusual graphic feature: its branches are not placed on the mainstave at a consistent point; rather, their positioning can vary. The branches of the **t**-rune can descend from the same point on the middle of the mainstave (r. 87) or from its upper part (r. 94); they can also descend from different points on the mainstave, but the rune’s left branch in this case always sits lower than its right (rr. 6, 27, 41 etc.); furthermore, the branches never cross the mainstave. The graphic minimal pairs therefore are not **n** and **l** but the bind-runes **an** or **al**, the left **a**-branch of which crosses the mainstave. The reason that I do not read these as dotted **t**-runes is provided in the catalogue (no 35).

I transliterate and mark word boundaries in the inscription as follows:

A: 1 **kalanta uiþr kalkla uiþr riþa-ta uiþ**

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

2 **uiþr rinanta uiþr salianta ui-**

35 40 45 50 55

B: 1 **r sikn--a uiþr f-ranta uiþr fliuh**

60 65 70 75 80 85

2 **anta s:alølt fupir auk um tu-a**

90 95 100 105 108

My reading differs from the earlier ones above all in the problematic sections, namely in the introduction, conclusion and the runic sequence 47–54. All the new runic readings are discussed at length in the catalogue. These new readings can, I hope, lead to new and improved attempts at interpretation.

³⁰¹ “samma runtecken har tecknats betydligt olika på skilda ställen”

4.3.4 New interpretation

4.3.4.1 Runes 1–16 (row A 1)

The inscription's introduction has, as we have seen, been interpreted in three ways. Jungner suggests [*Gal*] *viþ galanda*, *viþr ganganda* '[I incant] against the enchanting one, against the walking one'. Svärdström argues for *Gal anda viðr*, *gangla viðr* '[I] incant against the spirit, against the spirit who is inclined to walk'. Strid allies himself with Jungner although he does not accept his double-reading of the first three runes for the word *gal*, nor the moving of the preposition *viþr*; he does however accept Jungner's assumption of a substantial miscarving in the runic sequence 12–17 **kankla**. Strid's suggestion is *Galanda viðr*, *ganganda viðr* 'Against the incanting one, against the walking one'.

What is attractive about Svärdström's introductory *Gal anda viðr*, *gangla viðr* is that the preposition *viðr*, which was superfluous at the end of row 1 (rr. 29–31), now has a function. The prepositions in this row are, according to Svärdström, quite simply in postposition. The disadvantage of her suggestion as I see it (and also according to Strid) is the loss of parallelism. A further drawback is the weakening of the rhythm and alliteration of the introduction. The problems with Jungner's introduction have already been discussed: the most obvious of these is the supposed miscarving in the runic sequence (rr. 12–17) **kankla**. Let us now examine this sequence.

Svärdström's proposed adjective **gangull* 'the one who is inclined to walk' in oblique form, *gangla*, is in my opinion certainly possible; Strid (1994:304) however considers that "direct parallels" to Svärdström's interpretation are lacking, and concedes only that the suggestion "may well be considered as formally possible".³⁰² While the word is not independently attested in Old Swedish, Svärdström has shown that it occurs in Old Swedish compounds (*brun-gangol*, *by-gangol*) and has independently occurring cognates in related languages (OIce. *gongull*, OEng. *gengel*). The proposal is also supported by the occurrence of the Swedish dialectal verbs *gængla* and *gingla*. The word **gængill* m. for the runic sequence **kankla** was first suggested by Hugo Pipping and was mentioned by Jungner (1936:297) as a "word form that can be assumed",³⁰³ but which he in his interpretation disregards.

Strid's desire to read the beginning of the inscription as *Galanda viðr* 'Against the incanting one' inclines him to identify the following word as a present participle so that the introduction is similar in form to its continuation. To this end he keeps Jungner's interpretation of *ganganda*, despite the assumption of a miscarving. Had it not been for Strid's scepticism towards Svärdström's interpretation, I would not have questioned the reading of the runes 12–17. But since consensus was lacking on their interpretation, I made a careful investigation of their reading, discovering that it was justifiable to read rune 14 as **l** and therefore seek a new interpretation.

The runic sequence **kal̥kla** could conceal a weak nominalised adjective in acc. sg or pl., **galgla*, comprising the masculine noun *galge* with the suffix *all*.

³⁰² "får väl betraktas som formellt möjlig"

³⁰³ "antagbar ordform"

This suffix can form adjectives from nouns and verbs with the meaning ‘inclined to’ (Iversen 1973:161, Wessén 1965b:58). **Galgall* could then mean ‘inclined to be hanged, gallows bird’. The word is not attested in Old Swedish or Old Icelandic, but similar words formed in analogous ways do occur, e.g. adj. *svikall* ‘traitorous’ (Fritzner) which is formed from the noun *svik* n. + *-all*. Concrete nouns in Old Icelandic can also form such adjectives: one example is the OIcel. adj. *smásmugall*, which is formed from the noun *smuga* ‘narrow opening through which one can pass’ and the suffix *-all*. The word has both the concrete meaning ‘good at getting through narrow passages’ and a more metaphorical one ‘sharp, penetrating, careful in investigation, acknowledgement or judgment of things, such that nothing escapes one’s attention’³⁰⁴ (Fritzner).

In its weak form, **galgli*, the word may be understood as a negative description of a criminal or criminals “likely-to-be-hanged”, or possibly as a description of a person who committed suicide by hanging.

It is however impossible to discuss a word such as **galgli* without mention of the fact that there may be a connection between the enchanter and the hanged person beyond the former’s fear that the spirit of the hanged person will return and wreak havoc. One is reminded that Odin acquired his magical powers by hanging himself in a tree. Näsström (2002:244) and Sundqvist (2010:68) have collected the names of Odin which are associated with hanging, and these are surprisingly numerous and interesting (I reproduce all of the examples but have checked them against *Lexicon Poeticum* and corrected some spelling errors). Odin may be called ‘god of the hanged’ (*hangaguð*, *hanga-Týr*), ‘the hanged’, ‘lord of the gallows’, ‘burden of the gallows’ (*hangi*, *galga valdr*, *galga farmr*) as well as ‘he who visits the hanged’ (*hanga heimþinguðr*, cf. *Lexicon Poeticum*: *hangi* m.). A further designation is *Vöfuðr* ‘the dangler, he who hangs in the gallows and dangles his legs’. In *Nordiska kungasagor* 1:30 it is also stated that Odin sometimes “sat himself under the hanged”.

Verse 157 in *Hávamál* is usually understood as an allusion to Odin’s power to resurrect those who have been hanged, although it seems that the emphasis is in fact on communication with them. It is not resurrection itself which is his aim; rather, he seeks to talk to those who have been hanged and perhaps acquire new knowledge from them:

*Þat kann ek it tólpta,
ef ek sé á tré uppi
váfa virgilná,
svá ek ríst
ok í rúnum fák,
at sá gengr gumi
ok mælir við mik.*

I know a twelfth,
if up in a tree I see
hanged corpses dangling.
So I carve
and colour runes,
so that the corpse comes
and speaks to me.

(Mindy MacLeod’s translation of Brate 1913)³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ ‘dygtig til at komme igjennem trange passager’ and ‘skarp, gjennemtrængende, nøiagtig i sin undersøgelse, erkjendelse eller bedømmelse af tingene, saa at intet undgaar ens opmærksomhed’ respectively.

³⁰⁵ “Den tolfte jag kan, / om uppi träd jag ser / hängda döda dingla. / Så ristar jag / och runor färgar, / att den kroppen kommer / och talar mig till.”

Näsström (1997:87) summarises Odin's relationship with the gallows as follows: "Oden's connection with the gallows is manifold: he is not only the god of the hanged as we mentioned earlier but is also represented as the victim himself under the name Hangi 'the hanged'."³⁰⁶

Olof Sundqvist (2010:84–88) takes this a step further by suggesting that it is not only Odin himself who achieves magical powers by being hanged (through a rite of initiation), but that such rites could also have been practised by other, earthly cult leaders (p. 88):

Much suggests that the hanging of Oden in *Hávamál* should be interpreted as a prototypical rite of initiation. [- - -] A fundamental change occurs in Oden during this phase. He passes from being symbolically dead to alive again. At the same time his character and status are changed. He acquires new knowledge of the runes, the songs of power and perhaps the handling of sacrifices, which transform him into a "mythic cult leader". I have also argued that the knowledge acquired by Oden during the initiation in the tree was probably also necessary for the earthly cult leader, for example a *thul* or perhaps an *erilar*. It is completely possible that it was the future cult leader who in a real cultic context would undergo the prototypical hanging ritual of the Áss god in order to share in the supernatural knowledge.³⁰⁷

The analysis by Sundqvist and Näsström of the relationship between hanging, Odin and magical knowledge opens new possibilities of interpretation for the Högstena plate. It is possible to suggest that the spell is not aimed *against* hanged men, but that it is carved *for* them, or perhaps rather *with* them or *through* them. The preposition *viðr* which is used in the inscription does permit such an interpretation. Söderwall's dictionary notes that *viþ* can designate means and translates it 'with, through', in which case it is usually used with the accusative.

It is thus possible that hanging (as a rite of initiation or sacrifice) transferred magical knowledge, runes and skaldic powers not only to Odin but also to other, earthly cultic practitioners if they underwent a pseudo-hanging or perhaps if they, like Odin in *Hávamál*, were present at the side of the hanged.

I am inclined to retain the parallelism and alliteration of the introduction, for which reason I suggest interpreting it as *Galanda viðr, galgla viðr* 'With/Through the enchanting one(s), with the one(s) destined for the gallows'.

³⁰⁶ "Odens förbindelse med galgen är mångfaldig: han är inte bara de hängdas gud som vi tidigare nämnt, utan även framställd som offret själv under namnet Hangi 'den hängde'."

³⁰⁷ "Mycket talar för att Odens hängning i *Hávamál* skall tolkas som en prototypisk initiationsritual. [- - -] Under den fasen sker en fundamental förändring hos Oden. Han övergår från att vara symboliskt död till att bli levande igen. Samtidigt förändras hans karaktär och status. Han får nya kunskaper om runor, maktkväden och kanske offerhantering, som gör honom till en "mytisk kultledare". Jag har också argumenterat för att de kunskaper som Oden får under initiationen i trädet sannolikt också var nödvändiga för den jordiske kultledaren, till exempel en *thul*, eller kanske en *erilar*. Det är fullt möjligt att det var den blivande kultledaren, som i en reell kultisk kontext, skulle utföra asagudens prototypiska hängningsritual för att få ta del av de numinösa kunskaper-na."

4.3.4.2 Runes 47–65 (row A 2)

The two other problematic words are **salianta** and **sikn--a**. An interesting suggestion for interpretation was made in a letter by Magnus Olsen (in Jungner 1936:296, note 11): he suggests analysing the words as *seljanda* and *sign[and]a* ‘offering’ and ‘signing’. Jungner dismisses this suggestion, as “the interpretation would give the carving a substantially broader purpose than this essay cares to accept.”³⁰⁸ It is also dismissed by Svärdström (*SRI* 5:400 f.) with a short comment that her suggestion of ‘sitting’ and ‘sinking’ “is [...] decidedly better than Magnus Olsen’s”.³⁰⁹ I have difficulty agreeing with Svärdström on this. Her suggested interpretation is certainly decidedly better than Jungner’s ‘setting’ – ‘sailing’, which is based on an extended meaning of the verb ‘set’ as ‘set snares’ and a miscarving in **sikn--a**. Her interpretation nonetheless demands that one accept the reading **s[it]ianda**, which I cannot do. Olsen’s proposal receives partial support from Strid (1994:306 f.), who suggests interpreting **sikn--a** as an OSw. verb *signa* and convincingly shows that this verb could have the meaning ‘to practise magic with magical signs, cast a spell’.

In the same letter to Jungner, Olsen remarks on the OIcel. appellation *qlselja* ‘woman who offers drink, ale-giver’, which shows that the verb *selja* could have the meaning ‘offer, give’. In *Lexicon Poeticum*, the OIcel. word *selja* f. is translated as ‘giver’. One might also note words such as *veitiselja*, glossed in *Lexicon Poeticum* as ‘offering *selja*’ and *æskiselja* ‘wishing *selja*’. This indicates that *selja* was a designation for a woman who had the role of giver or cupbearer. It is also interesting to note the description of *dísablót* (sacrifice to the female spirits known as *dísir*) in chapter 44 of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, where the word *qlselja* is used in the following context: Egil remained sober at the sacrifice, despite emptying every horn given to him as well as some given to Alvir. This irritated Bard, who together with the king’s wife mixed poison (*ólyfja*) into Egil’s horn. Bard ‘signed’ (*signdi*) the horn and gave it to the ale-giver (*qlselja*). Thereupon Egil scratched his hand with a knife, painted runes on the horn with blood and composed a verse (chap. 44, verse 9).

The word *qlselja* for a participant in the sacrifice to the spirits is hardly an arbitrary choice here. It designates a person who performs an important function during the sacrifice, namely offering or pouring drink for the other participants. It may also be noted that the verb *signa* in the sense of ‘practise magic using magical signs’ is in a contextual relationship with the designation *qlselja*: *signdi Bárðr fullit, fekk síðan qlseljunni*. A further relevant text may be noted, namely two verses in *Sigrdrífumál* (8–9) which also show a relationship between the ability to practise magic using signs and situations involving the offering of food or drink.

³⁰⁸ “tolkningen skulle åt ristningen ge ett väsentligen vidare syfte, än denna uppsats vill göra gällande.”

³⁰⁹ “är [...] avgjort bättre än Magnus Olsens”

*Qlrunar skaltu kunna,
ef þú vill annars kvæn
vélit þik í tryggð, ef þú
trúir;
á horni skal þær rísta
ok á handar baki
ok merkja á nagli Nauð.*

*Full skal signa
ok við fári sjá
ok verpa lauki í lög;
þá ek þat veit,
at þér verðr aldri
meinblandinn mjöðr.*

You shall know ale-runes
if you want another's wife
not to betray you, when you feel safe.
You shall carve them on the horn
and on the back of the hand
and mark Need on the nail.

Magically sign the filled drinking
vessel
and beware of danger,
you shall place onion in the liquid;
then I know,
that there will never be
something malevolent mixed in the
mead.

(Mindy MacLeod's translation of Brate 1913)³¹⁰

In the verses cited above it is thus ale-runes which should be carved to protect against poison in the drinks consumed, but one must also learn to magically sign over the vessel: the contextual relationship between the risk of being poisoned when offered food or drink and the ability to use magic signs is clear here.

Let us now examine the verb *selja* more closely. The first meaning provided by Fritzner for this verb is 'deliver, surrender something to someone so that it is in his [or her] possession or keeping'.³¹¹ One could also deliver other people or even oneself to death (the examples are from Fritzner): 1) *tók hann þat ráð at fara í útleið heldr, en selja menn sína í dauða ok undir vápn sinna úvina* 'He decided to go into exile rather than to surrender his men to death and to the weapons of his enemies' and 2) *hann seldi sik til dauða, at vér mættim lifa* 'he surrendered himself to death (i.e. chose to die) so that we could live'. The meaning of *selja* thus need not be far removed from 'to sacrifice'.

At the end of *Rúnatal* (*Hávamál* verse 144) there are three verbs with the approximate meaning of 'sacrifice': *blóta*, *senda* and *sóa*; there is no verb *selja*:

<i>veiztu, hvé biðja skal?</i>	do you know how one shall ask?
<i>veiztu, hvé blóta skal?</i>	do you know how one shall sacrifice?
<i>veiztu, hvé senda skal?</i>	do you know how one shall dedicate?
<i>veiztu, hvé sóa skal?</i>	do you know how one shall put an end?

³¹⁰ "Ölrunor skall du kunna / om du vill, att annans hustru / ej sviker dig, då säker du tror dig.
På hornet skall du rista dem / och på handens bak / och märka på nageln Naud.
Fylla bägarn signa / och för fara dig akta, / du skall lägga i våtskan lök;
då vet jag, / att det varder dig aldrig / något menligt i mjödet blandat."

³¹¹ 'overlevere, overgive noget til en saa at han faar det i sin besiddelse eller varetægt'

Earlier in *Rúnatal* (*Hávamál* verse 139) there is however a verb which might be *selja*, although this is not entirely certain.³¹² The lines cited below indicate that the subject in *Rúnatal* did not receive the customary good treatment due to victims (who were usually treated well before being killed), and we can only speculate why:

<i>Við hleifi mik sældu</i>	[No] bread [they] offered me
<i>né við hornigi</i>	no horn of drink

Klaus Düwel (1970:230), however, observes that the verb *selja* in the Norse legendary saga *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* (p. 96) is used in a context which unequivocally has the sense ‘offer, give, sacrifice’ and that in a sacrificial setting it comprised a particular concept, equivalent to *blóta*, *senda* or *sóa*.

<i>Ek sé hanga</i>	I see hanging
<i>á hávum gálga</i>	on the high gallows,
<i>son þinn, kona,</i>	your son, woman,
<i>seldan Óðni</i>	given to Odin

Düwel (p. 230) therefore considers that “the context here also shows the use of *selja* as sacril”.³¹³ It may be added, moreover, that the verse in *Hálfs saga* alludes to an incident described in *Gautreks saga* (p. 30), where King Vikar is hanged by Starkad as a sacrifice to Odin. This hanging is first planned as a pseudo-sacrifice, using a calf’s intestine instead of a rope, on a flexible branch which would not be able to hold the weight of the king; the pseudo-sacrifice is however transformed in a mystic or magical way into a real sacrificial death. The well-known phrase *nú gefek þik Óðni* ‘now I sacrifice you to Odin’ is there pronounced by Starkad as he pierces the king with a reed, which suddenly becomes a spear.

Näsström (2002:33) also includes the verb *selja* in her account of the vocabulary of sacrifice: “The aspect of the gift of the sacrifice is emphasised through the verb ‘to give’ (*gefa*). *Gefa* (like *senda* and *selja*) is constructed with the recipient of the sacrifice in the dative and the sacrifice in the accusative, in contrast to *blóta*.”³¹⁴

It thus seems permissible in this context to translate **salianta** as ‘the offering one, the giving one’ or even as ‘the sacrificing one, the one who distributes sacrificial material among participants’.

The next problematic word is found in the runic sequence 59–65 **sikn--a**. Jungner sees the rune **n** standing in place of **l** and he translates the resulting word as ‘the sailing one’, while Svärdström suggests interpreting it as ‘the sink-

³¹² See Finnur Jónsson (1924:147), for example, and Grønvik (1999b:47): the form *sældu* (3 pers. pr.) probably derives from the Olcel. verb *selja* ‘deliver, give, sacrifice’, but it has also been suggested that this might be the weak verb *sæla* ‘gladden’ or *sóla* ‘satisfy hunger or thirst’.

³¹³ “[a]uch hier erweist der Kontext den Gebrauch von *selja* als sakral”

³¹⁴ “Offrets aspekt av gåva betonas genom verbet “giva” (*gefa*). *Gefa* (liksom *senda* och *selja*) konstrueras med offermottagaren i dativ och offret i akkusativ till skillnad från *blóta*.”

ing one'. Strid's suggestion of 'the signing one, the one who makes the sign of the cross' or 'the one who casts spells' is however most convincing, and in the following I take Strid's account as a point of departure for an elaborated discussion of the meaning of the verb *signa*.

Cleasby and Vigfusson (1957) write that the verb *signa* "occurs in one of the oldest heathen poems, and is applied to a northern heathen rite; it is common to all Teut. languages except Gothic." This opinion is shared by Thors (1957: 287 f.), who observes that the meanings 'bless under the sign of the cross' and 'bless in general' were not borrowed into Germanic but developed independently. He suggests that OSw. *sighna* means 'mark with the sign of the cross'. The meaning 'mark with the sign of the cross' is attested in Old Swedish (Söderwall) as well as in Old Icelandic and Old Danish (Fritzner, Kalkar). In addition to this well-attested meaning, the semantics of the verb seem to have further developed into 'practise magic with magical signs'. Kalkar's dictionary of Older Danish notes that *segne, signe* can mean "practise benevolent magic with signs or words"³¹⁵ and that a derivation *segnelse* can mean 'spell': *signelser oc anden dieffuels spøgeri*. Thors (1957:288) believes that this development occurred because the sign of the cross was considered to have strong magical powers. Thors and Strid draw attention to a secondary formation of the verb which is found in Old High German, i.e. *segen*. Strid observes that a runic inscription on one of the bow fibulae from Bezenye, Hungary (Düwel 2008:64) probably contains a word corresponding to this. Strid (1994:306) further writes that this formation "very early shows the meaning 'magical formula', a meaning which is also found in the Middle High German equivalent, *segen*. It may finally be observed that the meaning 'spell' is encountered in the Middle Low German *segenerie*, our *signeri*."³¹⁶ All of this seems to permit an interpretation of the Högstena inscription's *sikn(ant)α* as *signande* 'the one who casts spells' or 'the one who practises magic using magical signs'.

The combination of 'the offering one/the sacrificing one' and 'the one casting spells' seems to be contextually conditioned. As I noted above, the need to be able to 'sign' arises in connection with ritual meals where food or drink is offered. It thus seems reasonable to link the two words as a pair: 'through the offering one(s), through the one(s) casting spells/performing magic'.

4.3.4.3 Runes 89–108 (row B 2)

The final row of the inscription has not yet received a convincing interpretation. As observed above, there are problems with the interpretations of both Svärðström and Jungner. I suggest reading the line as *s.ālōltfufūpiraukumtu-α*, which allows us to consider new interpretations.

³¹⁵ "øve hjælpende trolddom ved tegn og ord"

³¹⁶ "rätt tidigt företer betydelsen 'trollformel', en betydelse som också finns hos den medelhögtyska motsvarigheten, *segen*. Slutligen kan nämnas att innebörden 'besvärjelse' möter i det medellågtyska *segenerie*, vårt *signeri*."

I will begin with the runic sequence **s-ālo**, the initial part of which (**s-ālo**) I interpret as runSw. *siālu-* or *sālu-* f. ‘soul’. The runic sequence **olt** can with double-reading of the **o**-rune be interpreted as *old(r)* n. ‘ale’. These can together be interpreted as corresponding to an OIcel. noun *sáluqldr* n. ‘grave-ale, funeral feast’³¹⁷ (Fritzner). According to Hertzberg & Storm’s *Glossarium till NGL* (Vol. 5, 1895), the OIcel. word *saloöl* is analogous with *erfiöl* n. and arose in a Christian context:

erfi, erfiöl, erfðaröl (gen. pl. *erfðaölda*, later *erfðaöldra*, Bugge) n. inheritance-ale, grave-ale, feast, which the closest heir holds on the occasion of the bequeather’s burial or the taking of the inheritance; the Christian church tried to claim the celebration as penance for the soul (*salobotar*) of the deceased, whence the designation *saloöl*.³¹⁸

Hertzberg cites an example from *Gulatingsslagen* (‘the Law of the Gula Thing’, which is considered to be from the second half of the eleventh century, with the oldest manuscripts from the twelfth century; see for example Rindal 1995:8) of this use of the word:

hvervetna þess er menn verða dauðir ok vill erfingi öl eptir gera, hvart sem gera vill at siaund eða at þritugsmorne, eða enn siðarr, þat kalla menn erföl; en ef menn gera öl ok kalla saloöl, þa skolo þeir til bioða presti ...; en prestr a til at fara nauðsynia-laust til erfðaölda eða saloölda.

‘Always when people die and the heir wants to drink ale (inheritance-feast) in their memory, which he does either on the seventh or the thirtieth day or even later, people call this inheritance-ale. If people drink ale and call it soul-ale, then they should invite a priest ...; a priest should be able to travel without hindrance to inheritance-ale or soul-ale.’³¹⁹

The variant *sāl(a)* is not attested in Västergötland; instead we find on Vg 50 *siāl(a)*, a form which was increasingly used during the latter half of the eleventh century (Källström 2016:155). More specifically, Källström notes that the form *sāl(a)*, which is otherwise very frequent in Uppland and Östergötland, is found neither on Gotland nor in Västergötland. This is an argument in favour of the existence of rune 90 **ī** (see my comments in the catalogue, no 35). Had the form *siāl(a)* been completely certain, this could have affected the dating of the Högstena plate, since the form *sāl(a)* was replaced by *siāl(a)* around the mid-eleventh century in runic Swedish, while the form *sāl(a)* was lost without a trace in the beginning of the twelfth (Källström 2016:163). Which of the readings **s(i)āl** and **sāl** actually occurred on the plate is however ultimately unknown.

³¹⁷ ‘gravøl, begravelsesgilde’

³¹⁸ “**erfi, erfiöl, erfðaröl** (gen. pl. *erfðaölda*, senere *erfðaöldra*, Bugge) n. arveøl, gravøl, gjæstebud, som nærmeste arving afholder i anledning af arveladerens begravelse eller arvens tiltrædelse; den kristne kirke søgte at hævde det som afholdt *til salobotar* for den afdøde, hvoraf benævnelsen *saloöl*.”

³¹⁹ “Alltid när folk dör och arvingen vill göra öl (arvgille) efter dem, som han antingen gör på den sjunde dagen eller på trettonde dagen eller ännu senare, kallar folk detta arveöl. Om folk gör arveöl och kallar det själaöl, då ska de bjuda in en präst ...; en präst skall kunna åka utan hinder till arveöl eller själaöl.”

The runic sequence **fupir** can be interpreted as the runSw. verb *fōða* ‘give birth to, nourish, support, produce, beget’ in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind., *fōðir*. The rest of the inscription **auk um tu(p)ā** can be interpreted as *ok um dau[ð]a*. The last word *dauða* is either 3 pers. acc. pl. of the adjective *dauðr* or acc. sg. of the noun *dauði* m. ‘death’. In Västergötland itself we have several attestations of the monographic writing of this word: **tupr dauðr** m. nom. sg. (Vg 40, Vg 61, Vg 178, Vg 197) and **tupir dauðir** in nom. pl. (Vg 184). The runic sequence **aukum** can be divided into the conjunction *ok* ‘and’ or the adverb ‘also’, and the preposition *um*, which can mean ‘because of, for the sake of, as a result of, with the help of, concerning, regarding’. With all of these senses, the preposition is used with the accusative. In Söderwall’s dictionary there occur among many other meanings the following two for the prep. *um*, namely ‘about a common matter of (something); to designate (common) participation, ownership etc.’ as well as ‘to designate that which something is about (in a spiritual sense): about, concerning, regarding’.³²⁰

The final phrase may then read: ‘Grave-ale gives food (nourishment) through/as a result of/with the help of the deceased’. Staffan Fridell has however drawn my attention to the fact that the preposition *um* can also mean ‘beyond, after (a time)’³²¹ (*Norrøn ordbok*), whereby the concluding phrase may also be translated as ‘Grave-ale gives food (nourishment) after/beyond death’.

The ritual drinking of mead or ale in memory of the deceased is well attested in Old Icelandic sagas, and there is according to François-Xavier Dillmann (1997:62) no reason to “doubt the information of the Northern authors on periodic ritual feasts in pre-Christian times”.³²² During the aforementioned sacrifice to the *dísir* in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, Egil drinks ale in commemoration of the deceased. The words *barnöl* and *gravöl* also attest to similar traditions.

Andreas Nordberg (2003:183–193) has made a comprehensive investigation of the connection between Odin, death, the drinking of mead, the sacrifice of animals (through hanging, amongst other ways) and the women who distribute ale. He concludes (pp. 208–210) that all of these components are linked and comprise part of a ritual offering a sacral communion with Odin and the deceased.

The inscription on the Högstena plate was probably carved during or after a funeral feast or celebration in memory of the deceased, which may have included the ritual killing of animals or people (presumably criminals in this case) through hanging. There are also other runic inscriptions which have a connection with ritual killing, e.g. the Stentofte stone (DR 357) with its ‘with nine bucks, with nine stallions *Hapuwolf* gave a good year’. It may also be mentioned that the word *hūsli* on the Rök stone (Ög 136) has been interpreted as

³²⁰ ‘om ett gemensamt varande omkring (ngt); för att beteckna (gemensamt) deltagande, egande o. s. v.’; ‘för att beteckna det kring hvilket (i andligt afseende) ngt rör sig: om, rörande, angående’

³²¹ ‘(ut) over, etter (ei tid)’

³²² “betvivla de norröna författarnas uppgifter om periodiska rituella gästabad i förkristen tid”

‘through a sacrifice’, dat. sg. of a word corresponding to Old Icelandic *húsl* or *hunsl* (Palm 2004:34). This word had the profane meaning of ‘evening meal’, and was accepted into Christian terminology with the meaning ‘Eucharist’.

We even know that different farms in Västergötland itself, where the Högstena plate comes from, celebrated *álfablót* during the first half of the eleventh century. This is clear from four verses in *Austrfararvísur* (by the skald Sighvatr Þórðarson), which were extensively analysed by Jan de Vries (1932–1933: 169–180). He arrives at the following conclusion (p. 174):

These different circumstances show in all desired clarity that this *álfablót* was a funeral celebration and largely comparable to the worship of the souls during the Christmas festivities which continues into the modern period. This also occurs on a particular evening and is celebrated in each individual family. Álfar are – this requires no further explanation – the souls of the dead.³²³

The verses from *Austrfararvísur* also confirm the occurrence during this celebration of three components which are also found in the Högstena inscription: the theme of sacrifice (the offering one[s], the signing one[s]), the drinking of ale and a connection with Odin (the hanged one[s]). The word *siðloöld* in this context indicates however that the celebration may already have begun to include a fourth component, namely the new faith with its servants (priests) and the concept that the souls of the deceased must be saved in order to deserve eternal life through the actions of the living in their memory, for example through the food and drink given out to all participants at the memorial feast. A similar blend of old and new traditions occurs on the Solberga plate (where Christ and Saint Mary are entreated to drive the three-headed troll away from a woman giving birth). The inscription on the Kvinneby plate also suggests the coming of Christianity in certain choices of word (the verb *gēta*, the expression *allt illu*).

4.3.4.4 Runes 22–42 (rows A 1–2)

My new interpretation of the word pair *sælianda* and *sign[and]a* occasions a need to investigate the other word pairs in the inscription. I see no reason to reconsider our understanding of the word pair *f[a]randa* and *fliüganda*, but this is not the case with the word pair *rīðā[n]da* and *rinnanda*. Both Jungner and Svärdström inclined to the belief that all the present participles in the inscription designated physical movement (from one place or position to another). The word pair *sælianda* and *sign[and]a* show however that the verbs may not refer exclusively to physical movement: they may be linked to a ritual, or touch on the theme of sacrifice. If we consider the inscription afresh,

³²³ “Diese verschiedenen Umstände zeigen mit aller gewünschten Deutlichkeit, dass dieses *álfablót* eine Totenfeier war und im grossen ganzen mit der bis in die Neuzeit fortlebenden Verehrung der Seelen während des Julfestes zu vergleichen ist. Auch dieses findet an einem bestimmten Abend statt und wird in jeder einzelnen Familie gefeiert. Álfar sind ja – das braucht nicht näher ausgeführt zu werden – die Seelen der Toten.”

we find in the verbs *riða* and *renna/rinna* meanings which may belong to this new theme.

The primary meanings for the OIcel. verb *riða* in *Norrøn ordbok* are ‘swing in a half circle, lie or stand in an unsteady or precarious manner, waver, swing, swivel, roll; as well as tip, tilt, fall’.³²⁴ Meanings for the OIcel. verb *renna/rinna* include ‘make an end of, hinder’ (*Norrøn ordbok*).³²⁵ We can thus suggest that *rīða[n]da* means ‘the one who swings (from the gallows)’, while *rinnanda* can mean ‘the one who makes an end of, kills’ (e.g. runs a spear through someone, as is often the fate of one who has been hanged, cf. Näsström 1997). In this way we have the entire chain of events relating to a feast of this particular type: someone or some people are predisposed, predestined or sentenced to be hanged, they are hanged and swing (or they are bound and hanged) and they are killed; thereafter offerings are made, which are consecrated with signs. The travelling and flying may be the souls of the deceased leaving this world.

4.3.4.5 Possible human sacrifice in Sweden during the eleventh and twelfth centuries

As the new interpretation of the inscription seems to refer to a feast and to mention hanging (of people or animals), there is occasion to look for evidence of whether such ritual killings occurred in Scandinavia during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. I would like first to emphasise, however, that I do not believe that the inscription on the Högstena plate was linked to a particular human sacrifice. It is not known who the hanged ones were, whether they were animals or people, whether or not they were hanged in connection with the carving of the inscription, whether they were sacrificed to a deity, or whether it concerned the ritual killing of criminals. Klas af Edholm (2016:141) states that the “ritual killing of people who were not sacrifices is attested in the archaeological material, for example in burial contexts where people comprised part of the burial gifts. They do not constitute sacrifices as defined by religious phenomenology. Even the execution of criminals and prisoners may have a ritual framework, but not constitute a sacrifice.”³²⁶

The ritual killing of humans is thus attested, while the occurrence of sacrificial rites including such killing is controversial. Certain scholars (e.g. Düwel 1970; Hultgård 2001) are sceptical that such a phenomenon ever occurred in Scandinavia, while others are more disposed to see evidence of human sacrifice (e.g. Näsström 2002; Simek 2004). Klas af Edholm (2016:126) observes that

³²⁴ ‘svinge i ein halvkrins, liggje el. stå ustøtt el. vegande, vakle, svinge, svive, bikke; også tippe, vippe over, falle’

³²⁵ ‘gjere ende på, hindre’

³²⁶ “rituellt dödande av människor, som inte utgör offer, finner man i det arkeologiska materialet i bl.a. gravkontexter där människor ingår i gravgåvorna. Dessa utgör inga offer utifrån en religion-fenomenologisk definition. Även avrättandet av brottslingar och fångar kan ha en rituell inramning, men utgör inte ett offer.”

this may depend upon the research discipline involved: “The text-orientated research into the history of religion has at times been critical of the idea that human sacrifice took place, while archaeology has often been more inclined to interpret certain finds as the remains of sacrificed humans.”³²⁷

As regards written sources, one is first reminded of Adam of Bremen’s report of Uppsala in the eleventh century, namely that 72 men were hanged in a tree during the sacrifices at the temple of Uppsala. Adam himself did not visit the site, and his information is of course not entirely reliable, but it indicates that human sacrifice need not have been foreign to eleventh-century Scandinavia. Anders Hultgård (1997:43) states that “with the exception of a number of details concerning the cult itself, Adam’s account appears credible.”³²⁸ He also notes (p. 37), however, that “it nevertheless seems unlikely that [human sacrifice] would have been a regular feature of the public cult in Viking-Age Scandinavian religion.”³²⁹ Britt-Mari Näsström (1997:79–93) lists literary examples of ritual hangings in Scandinavia in her article “Stucken, hängd och dränkt” (‘Pierced, hanged and drowned’) and concludes: “[Adam’s] description of the sacrifices in the grove in Uppsala are however not unreasonable if one considers what other sources say about ritual hangings among Germanic tribes, although one should perhaps be cautious with the information about the great national sacrifice occurring every ninth year. Human sacrifices are usually, as mentioned, associated with crisis situations and such rites rarely occur on a calendrical basis.”³³⁰

Näsström (1997) should be consulted for the many literary examples of ritual hangings. Two iconographic equivalents are the picture stone from Hammars, Lärbro, on Gotland and the Oseberg tapestry, which may be regarded as iconographic proof that human sacrifice occurred during the Viking Age. The tapestry from the Oseberg ship includes a scene with a large tree covered in hanged humans. The picture stone from Lärbro shows a person with a noose around the neck hanging from the top of a bent tree, beside which are two people standing by what might be an altar. Olof Sundqvist (2010:87) interprets this depiction as alluding to the same kind of initiation as he sees in the well-known verses describing the hanging of Odin for nine nights in *Rúnatal* (138–141), i.e. a depiction of a ritual pseudo-hanging, the aim of which was to initiate a cultic leader. His strongest support for this interpretation is found, in my opinion, in the toes

³²⁷ “Man har inom den textorienterade religionshistoriska forskningen tidvis varit kritisk till uppfattningen att människooffer förekom, medan man inom arkeologin ofta varit mer benägen att tolka vissa fynd som resterna efter offrade människor.”

³²⁸ “[m]ed undantag av en del detaljer som rör själva kulten bär Adams notiser trovärdighetens prägel.”

³²⁹ “[d]et ter sig emellertid osannolikt att [människooffer] skulle varit ett regelbundet inslag i den offentliga kulten i vikingatida skandinavisk religion.”

³³⁰ “[Adams] skildring av offren i lunden i Uppsala är dock inte orimlig om man tar hänsyn till vad övriga källor berättar om hängningsriter bland germanska stammar, låt vara att man kanske skall ta uppgiften om det stora riksbetet som återkom vart nionde år med försiktighet. Människo-offren brukar, som nämnts, vanligen höra hemma i krissituationer och uppträder med sällsynthet som kalendariska riter.”

of the hanged body, which point upwards rather than down as if to indicate that the person was alive.

Last but not least we can consider a number of archaeological finds. Klas af Edholm (2016:126) discusses at length the difficulties in determining whether finds should be considered the remains of humans killed ritually or sacrificially and concludes that “a combined picture of the source material from Archaeology and the History of Religion reinforces the idea that human sacrifice was probably an actual (although exceptional) practice throughout the Iron Age in Scandinavia.”³³¹ He provides (pp. 136–140) some examples from the last fifteen years’ archaeological excavations in Sweden. Among these are three places where the sacrifice of humans may be evidenced with archaeological finds from 800–1000, namely Uppåkra in Scania, Lunda and Ströja in Södermanland and Bokaren in Stavby, Uppland. af Edholm (p. 140 f.) warns the reader, however:

In all of these cases, the presence of human bones can of course have other explanations apart from being the remains of sacrificed humans (they may derive from later placements in disturbed graves, for example, or comprise a divergent treatment of the deceased in connection with burial), but the very occurrence in a clear cultic context actualises the problematics of human sacrifice and means it cannot be summarily discounted. [- - -] In the new archaeological finds we see a repeated pattern of human bodies being deposited at cultic sites, primarily in wet ground. Some occur in connection with the sacrifice of weapons, which is consistent with continental Germanic analogies. We see a clearer connection in the new finds between human bones and other sacrificial offerings at cultic sites. The bodies have thus been treated as sacrificial material. Whether the death itself was a sacrifice still cannot be determined with any certainty, but the traces of (fatal) violence on the remains indicate that this cannot be regarded as improbable.³³²

To sum up, it can be stated that the inscription on the Högstena plate may have been connected to a rite involving the hanging of humans, but we will never know the purpose of their deaths: whether they were sacrificed to a deity or punished for their misdeeds. The theme of sacrifice is however clearly present in the inscription in the word pair *seljanda* and *signanda*. The remaining word pairs could also, as I have shown, be considered in the same context.

³³¹ “en sammantagen bild av det arkeologiska och religionshistoriska källmaterialet stärker bilden av att människooffer sannolikt var en förekommande (om än exceptionell) praktik under hela järnåldern i Skandinavien.”

³³² “I samtliga av dessa fall kan givetvis närvaron av människoben ha andra förklaringar än att de utgör resterna av offrade människor (de kan härröra från omrörda gravar i ditförda schaktmassor exempelvis, eller utgöra en avvikande behandling av de döda i samband med begravning), men just förekomsten i en tydlig kultisk kontext gör att människoofferproblematiken blir aktuell och inte primärt kan uteslutas. [- - -] I de nya arkeologiska fynden ser vi ett återkommande mönster med människokroppar som deponerats på kultplatser, företrädesvis våtmarker. Vissa förekommer i samband med vapenoffer, vilket överensstämmer med kontinentalgermanska analogier. Vi ser i de nya fynden ett tydligare samband mellan människoben och andra offergåvor på kultplatser. Kropparna har således behandlats som offermateria. Om själva dödandet har utgjort ett offer ligger alltså bortom säkra slutsatser, men spåren av (dödligt) våld på kvarlevorna talar för att det inte kan anses osannolikt.”

4.3.4.6 Summary

My transliteration, normalisation and translation of the inscription are:

A: 1 **kal anta uiþr kalkla uiþr riþa-ta uiþ**

2 **uiþr rinanta uiþr salianta ui-**

B: 1 **r sikn--a uiþr f-ranta uiþr fliuh**

2 **anþa s-ālolt fupir auk um tu-a**

Galanda viðr, galgla viðr, rīða[n]da viðr, viðr rinnanda, viðr sælianda, vi[ð]r sign[and]a, viðr f[a]randa, viðr fliūganda. Sālold fōðir ok um dau[ð]a.

Through the enchanting one(s), through the one(s) destined for the gallows, through the swinging one(s), through the ending [i.e. killing] one(s), through the offering one(s), through the one(s) performing magic, through the travelling one(s), through the flying one(s). The funeral feast [grave-ale] also gives nourishment with the help of the dead/after death.

My reading of the runic sequences 12–17 **kal|kla** and 47–54 **salianta** is based on the internal context of the inscription and therefore seems more credible than corresponding earlier readings. Strid's and my suggested interpretation of **sikn--a** as *signanda* 'the one who makes the sign of the cross' or 'the one performing magic' is advantaged by being closer to literary depiction than the interpretations of Svärdström and Jungner as well as forming a contextual word pair with the preceding word **salianta** *sælianda* 'the offering one'. The final section also seems to have a more secure reading, and its interpretation connects more naturally to the preceding lines.

The text which thus emerges can nevertheless no longer be called a warding-off formula. It comes rather close to the epic formulas with descriptions of a certain chain of events; it is also similar to ritual formulas containing instructions for a particular rite. I therefore cautiously suggest classifying the formula as epic-ritual.

4.3.4.7 Dating of the Högstena plate

Only a broad dating of the Högstena plate can be suggested, i.e. 1050–1150. The plate's runes belong to the Viking Age but certain runic forms point towards the Middle Ages, e.g. **h** with a large cross, **n** with a long branch which reaches to the base line and **m** with long branches which begin almost at the base of the mainstave. There are however no characteristically mediaeval runes and in my opinion no dotted runes either. An archaic feature is however noticeable in the alliteration of the inscription.

4.4 Old Uppsala plate 1 (U ATA351-1796-2014), Uppland

The plate was discovered during archaeological excavations in Old Uppsala in 2012. It is broken along one side and therefore considered with the fragmentary plates. It has been archaeologically dated to the eleventh to twelfth century and is made of copper alloy. Its current length is 22 mm, the width 29 mm and the thickness c. 0.5 mm. The plate is currently being kept in Uppsala with the consultant organisation ‘The Archaeologists’ (‘Arkeologerna’) SHM, find no: 909; context: 32 4265; find unit: 32 4970).

The inscription runs over both sides with three rows on each side (Figure 25). The order of reading is unusual: row 1 on side A is read from left to right whereupon the plate is turned 180 degrees and rows 2 and 3 on side A are also read from left to right. The same procedure is repeated on the reverse, although the plate is turned here after row 2.

The inscription has been published by Magnus Källström (2013b:84 f., 2014c) who transliterates, normalises and translates it as follows (2014c:1–4):

A: **halhiia... 𐌺 ...-hiialbi 𐌺 ...rinah**

1 5 10 15 20

B: **alhi... 𐌺 mikaln... 𐌺 ...atrina**

25 30 35

Hælgī ... hialpi ... [Kat]rina. Hælgī ... Mikael(?) ... [K]atrina.

Holy ... help ... Katarina. Holy ... Mikael(?) ... Katarina.

The inscription has no mediaeval runes, and the prayer is composed in Old Swedish rather than Latin; as a consequence, the plate is included in this corpus. I have inspected the plate only once (in March 2017), and my reading coincides with Källström’s with the exception of rune 29, which I read as a bind-rune **ēl** (see my comments in the catalogue, no 20).

The inscription seems to contain a Christian prayer to two or rather several saints, of whom two are men: the form of the adj. *hæilagr* ‘holy’ is **halhi hælgī**, which is the definite form in masculine nominative. Although the possibility cannot be discounted, this seems unlikely to be the masculine name *Hælgī*. Källström (2014c:5) also cautiously suggests that the runic sequence 8–15

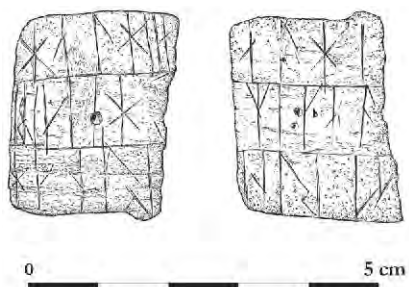


Figure 25. Old Uppsala plate 1. © Sofia Pereswett-off-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

-**hiialbi** may contain this adjective ((**hal**)**hi ialbi**), which would explain the double writing of the **i**-rune in the sequence. While the suggestion is possible, the reading is uncertain and it is difficult to explain the syntax since the word is followed by the verb *hialpi* in 3 pers. sg. pres. subj. rather than the name of a saint.

Källström further observes that *Katarina* could be the name of a saint, but notes concurrently that Catherine of Alexandria began to be worshipped later in Scandinavia than on the continent, i.e. not before the thirteenth century. He therefore prefers the suggestion that this is the high-status name *Katarina*, and that this was the name of the owner of the plate. The inscription could have been much longer (as may be indicated by the plate's width of only 29 mm), and the fact that the name terminates the inscription may indicate that Källström's second suggestion is correct.

The name *Mikael* is uncertain according to Källström (2014c:5 f.), since one cannot discount the possibility of segmenting the runic sequence **mikaſn...** (e.g. into **mik** and **aſn...**). Källström notes that this name is attested on Viking-Age runestones (see his examples on p. 5), but he does not discuss (and this may be a consequence of the uncertain reading) whether it is a saint's name. In an earlier article (2013b:85), Källström suggests however that the inscription may reproduce the name of the archangel Michael. Lena Peterson (pers. comm.) has suggested the possibility of identifying rune 29 as the dotted bind-rune **ēl**, which would solve the problem with the name. The only consideration against this suggestion is that the sign would have coalesced in form with the bind-rune **ſn**. One may observe however that the **n**-runes in this inscription have somewhat longer branches than that in the possible dotted **i**-rune.

4.5 The Skänninge plate (Ög NOR2001;32), Östergötland

The runic plate was discovered in 2000 during preliminary archaeological investigations in the 'Abboten' block, plot 6, on Motalagatan 24, Skänninge (RAÄ-no Skänninge 5:1).

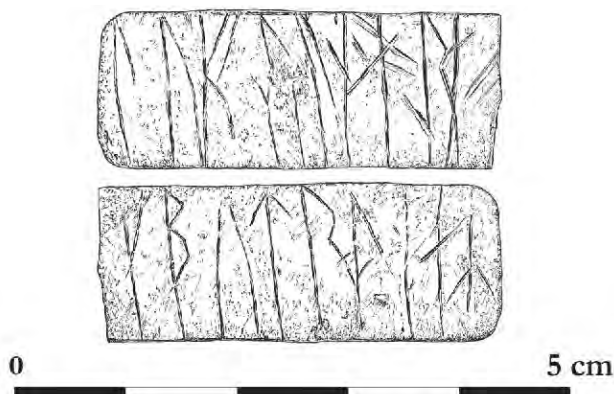


Figure 26. The Skänninge plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Viktoria Björkhager (2010:11, 14) describes the find context in the following way:

Several thin layers of culture were found inside the yard of the property Abboten 6 under the platform leading into the main dwelling. The character of the layers was different, but the lower layer (L7) proved of most interest. This was covered by several stones and comprised sooty sand. A great amount of burnt clay, cremated and uncremated bones as well as some slag mixed with blackware ceramics was found towards the bottom. The most spectacular find in the layer was however a runic plate containing carved runes. [- - -] Osteological analysis of the animal bones gave no indication that the skeletal material derived from artisan activities but that it comprised food remains.³³³

We can thus state that the plate derives from a domestic context. The ceramics (blackware) found with the plate can be dated to the eleventh or twelfth century.

The plate is made of copper alloy.³³⁴ One of its short sides has broken off, and it is therefore considered with the fragmentary plates (Figure 26 above). It is 36 mm long, 14 mm wide and 1 mm thick. The plate has been investigated and interpreted by Helmer Gustavson (2001:31–33), and his normalisation (without vowel length) and translation of this inscription can be accounted one of the least problematic in the entire corpus (p. 32):

A: **luf-unari...**

B: **...kbutrunar**

Lyfrunar ri[st ia]k, botrunar.

Healing-runes I carve, cure-runes.

In a later publication (in Björkhager & Gustavson 2002:193), Gustavson chooses to read the final two runes of the A-side first, followed by all of side B and then the rest of side A:

Ri[st ia]k, botrunar, lyfrunar ...

I carve cure-runes, (I carve) healing-runes ...

This is clearly influenced by a mediaeval runic inscription from Bergen (N B257) with its well-known formulation *Ríst ek bótrunar, ríst ek bjargrúnar*. This reading order appears forced, however, as one must begin reading the inscription towards the end of side A and then return to this side after reading side B. It is also problematic to represent the ellipsis in the normalisation as follow-

³³³ “Inne på tomtmark till kv Abboten 6 påträffades flera tunna kulturlager under plattgången som leder in till bostadshuset. Kulturlagren var av olika karaktär, men det var det undre lagret (L7) som visade sig var[a] mest intressant. Det överlagrades av flera stenar och utgjordes av sotig mo. Mot botten framkom mängder med bränd lera, brända ben och obrända ben samt en bit slagg blandat med svartgodskeramik. Det mest spektakulära fyndet i lagret var dock ett runbleck med inristade runor. [- - -] Den osteologiska analysen av djurbenen visar att det inte finns några tecken på att skelettmaterialet härrör från hantverksaktiviteter utan att det utgörs av matavfallsrester.”

³³⁴ Bronze and copper according to Källström (2007a:356); Björkhager’s report (2010) gives the material as copper and copper alloy.

ing the word *lyfrunar* as this does not reflect the actual break in the inscription, which occurs after the presumed *ri[st]*.

The inscription, according to the interpretation by Gustavson, is missing two runes on the obverse (**st**) and two on the reverse (**ia**). The dubious point of this suggestion is that there is no trace of the supposed branch of the **a**-rune in the broken edge of side B (see figure 46.1.2 in the catalogue). Gustavson (2001:31) notes that “the broken edge may have followed a vertically cut line”,³³⁵ which might imply that the plate broke apart because the metal was weakened at the point where the two staves were carved on either side. Gustavson (p. 32) further notes that “[in] the upper half of the left broken edge of the B-side is a barely observable augmentation which may be the remains of the right branch on the mainstave.”³³⁶ It is therefore remarkable to labour with an **a**-rune in the broken edge since, as noted above, no trace of any branch can be discerned (**a**-runes have double-sided branches in this inscription).

Magnus Källström (2007a:356) suggests supplementing the inscription and reading as follows:

A: **luf-unari...**

B: **...kbutrunar**

Lyfrūnar ri[st]

[iak (þēr?) o]k bōtrūnar.

Healing-runes carve [I (for you)] and cure-runes.

Källström motivates his reading order with parallels in the Østermarie plate: *Āki(?) ræist biargrūnar ok ...* as well as in the celebrated verse from *Skírnismál* 36: *Þurs rísta ek þér ok þrjá stafí*. The order suggested by Källström seems more credible than that of Gustavson’s second suggestion, although the same reservations apply against the supplementing of an **o** or **a**-rune as those already mentioned: we lack all traces of branches in the broken edge of side B, and the most probable supplementation ought to be an **i**-rune. I therefore suggest reading this inscription as *Lyfrūnar ri[st e]k bōtrūnar*. In this way we supplement only three runes: **st** on the obverse and **i** on the reverse. It may be wondered whether there is room for two runes on the obverse if the reverse is missing only one. One can however observe that rune 9 **i** is carved very close to the preceding rune **r** (see figure 46.1.1 in the catalogue). Is this in order to create space for a further two runes? Another solution is possible, namely that the inscription had a bind-rune of **st** on the obverse. It cannot be decided for certain here whether the supposed runSw. verb *rīsta* is in the weak conjugation, i.e. *rīsti ek* ‘may I carve, I carved’ or its strong variant *rīst ek* ‘I carve’ (the same problem applies to the verb *rīsta* in the introduction of the Kvinneby plate). The inscription must then be translated as:

Healing-runes I carve/carved/may carve, cure-runes.

³³⁵ “[b]rottkanten har möjligen följt en lodrätt skuren linje”

³³⁶ “I den övre hälften av B-sidans vänstra brottkant finns en knappt iakttagbar förhöjning som kan vara rester av högra graden till en huvudstav.”

4.6 Two problematic runic plates – Latin or Old Swedish?

Plates with runic inscriptions in Latin are not included in the present study. There are however two problematic plates with inscriptions which do not allow a decision as to whether they are composed in Latin or runic Swedish. These are Vassunda plate 3 and Sigtuna plate 2.

Vassunda plate 3 was found together with a further two copper plates (Vassunda plates 1 and 2) in a human grave on the land belonging to Vassunda rectory in 1925. Nordén (1943:179–186) provides all three plates with Old Swedish translations while Svärdström (1969a:37, fn. 2) points out that plates 1 and 2 are likely to be composed in Latin. Helmer Gustavson (2003a:75) therefore later suggested a Latin translation of Vassunda plate 2 as well, which was developed and improved by Thomas Hammar (2006) and Victor Frans (2014). Vassunda plate 1 repeats part of the text on the B-side of Vassunda plate 2, for which reason it is also considered to be in Latin, despite remaining uninterpreted. These two plates are therefore not included in the present work but I have nevertheless examined them in order to improve my understanding of the third plate. While it remains unclear whether the inscription on Vassunda plate 3 is written in Latin as the two other plates probably are, or if perhaps Nordén was right about this particular runic plate, I have attempted to provide some answers below.

Svärdström believes that the inscription on Sigtuna plate 2 has an introduction in Latin; Gustavson (2014:8) however assumes that the inscription is in Old Swedish. I will therefore investigate this runic plate more closely as well.

4.7 Vassunda plate 3 (U AST1;183), Uppland

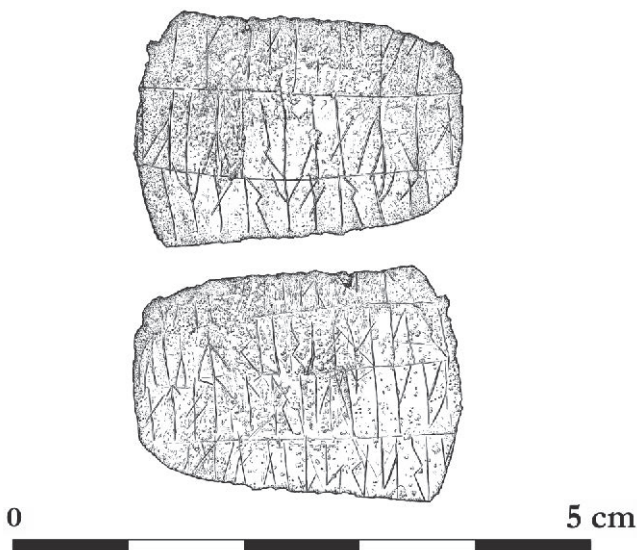
The plate is 48 mm long, 34 mm wide and c. 1 mm thick. It is kept at the Museum of Nordic Archaeology in Uppsala (*Museum Gustavianum*) with inventory number 5711:3. Its two sides covered with text have three rows on the obverse and four on the back. The reading order of the inscription is boustrophedon. The edges of the plate are weathered but in principle preserved in their entirety (Figure 27). It is however possible that the left short side of the plate had rectangular corners when it was carved which were later rounded. This would explain why two runes (23 and 34 in my reading) are half lost (see figures 32.6 and 32.7 in the catalogue). An upper layer of oxide remains and nearly all of the runes are clear but there is a great deal of weathering in row 4 on side A and row 1 on side B (my row division), where runes are missing.

Nordén (1943:183–185) provides the following transliteration of the inscription:

A: **gimarmærfai ¶ hlfakrimifa ¶ ikihiiiift**

B: **-rsrstikfqa ¶ atælalristikfa ¶ rsaærirmkif ¶ f--...-s-ft-**

Figure 27. The Vassunda plate 3. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.



He does suggest (p. 185) an interpretation of the inscription but concedes “it would be a shame to see anyone put much faith in this result.”³³⁷ The suggested interpretation is:

Em armer, fae, ekki hel-gift! (hl?) fager em æva.
urs rist-ik fra, **at æl al** rist-ik fra, **rsa** ører mik æva

I am poor, may I get ... not the gift of death (eternal death)! (?) I am never fair. **urs** I carve ... **at æl al** I carve ... **rsa** never confuses me.³³⁸

Nordén prefers to interpret the inscription as letter magic. He compares it to the inscription on the Villberga plate, which he also interprets as letter magic, observing: “As the Villberga amulet is clearly based on the use of runes purely as letter magic, the same conclusion can be applied to the inscription on the Vassunda plate.”³³⁹

My transliteration follows below, while a commentary is found in the catalogue (no 32):

A: **-ikihi---ft ¶ hlfakrimif- ¶ -imarmorfai**

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

B: **-rsrstikfrā- ¶ atorlistikf ¶ rsaorirmkif ¶ f---s-ft-**

35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 76

My division of rows on side A is different to Nordén’s, although I do not consider his impossible. It does seem more reasonable to begin to read from the

³³⁷ “det vore synd att säga, att man med någon högre grad av förtroende betraktade detta resultat.”

³³⁸ “Jag är arm, må jag få ... icke döds-gåva (den eviga döden)! (?) fager är jag aldrig. **urs** ristar jag ... **at æl al** ristar jag ... **rsa** förvirrar mig aldrig.”

³³⁹ “Då Villbergaamuleten alldeles tydligt är byggd på rent bokstavsmagiskt bruk av runorna, torde samma slutsats härifrån kunna överföras på Vassundableckets inskrift.”

top downwards rather than to start at the bottom and proceed upwards. This reading order is also supported by other lexical runic plates. The Kvinneby plate for example shows a boustrophedon reading order which descends from the top.

4.7.1 Discussion

Nordén's comments about the correspondences between the Villberga plate and Vassunda plate 3 seem to me overhasty. The Villberga plate consists of two almost identical runic sequences which are repeated a number of times: **rhisatrhr** occurs twice and **ifrhisatrhr** four times, while the runic inscription on the Vassunda plate has no repeated sequences. It does of course contain two sequences which are reminiscent of each other, namely 37–43 **rstikfr̥q** and 50–57 **ristikfr**. These can nonetheless best be interpreted as lexical rather than as letter magic. The Vassunda plate also has more vowel runes than the Villberga plate.

From purely phonotactical considerations, the inscription on the Vassunda plate gives the impression of being lexical: the ratio of vowels to consonants as well as their position in regard to one another seem quite allowable for an inscription which is in principle interpretable. The question then is whether it best matches Latin or Old Swedish phonotactics.

There are a number of consonant combinations in the inscription which can be tested in Latin and Old Swedish. A combination which is unnatural word-initially in both languages is **rs**: we must here assume a word boundary or the middle of a word. This is however difficult to conceive of in the runic sequence 35–41 **rsrstik**. It therefore seems appropriate to here consider the possibility of some form of abbreviation or code. Another combination of consonants which is abnormal word-initially in both Latin and Old Swedish is **rl**: it is however permissible in the middle of a limited number of words in both languages, and in Old Swedish also in final position in a small number. In the runic sequence 45–55 **atorlristik** it is nonetheless again probable that we should operate with an abbreviation of some sort. The consonant combination **hl** is impossible in Latin but normal, if unusual, in Old Swedish. Further, the consonant combination **ft**, which occurs twice in the inscription, is impossible initially for both Latin and Old Swedish, but can easily be found at the middle or end of a word in the latter. The two other consonant combinations of **rmk** in 62–66 **irmkif**, and **kf** in 50–57 **ristikf** and 38–43 **rstikf** do not fit well into either language. Here again we need to fall back on word boundaries or abbreviations. As regards vowels, it can only be stated that the combination **ao** is possible in both Latin and Old Swedish if assigned the sound value /au/. The conclusion is then that the phonotactics lean more toward Old Swedish than Latin.

If we nevertheless attempt to identify Latin words in this inscription, we are immediately drawn to the runic sequence **marmor** 'marble', but the word could

also be a borrowing into Old Swedish (see Söderwall: *marmor*, *marmorsten*). There are early attestations of this word in Latin inscriptions in Sweden and thus nothing precludes the suggestion of an early borrowing into runic Swedish. The word is found for example in a Latin inscription on a gravestone in Vårkumla church, Västergötland (Blennow 2016:201 ff.). The stone has been dated to c. 1150-1200 on palaeographic grounds.

It is perhaps superfluous to point out the temptation of interpreting **imar-morfa** as *ī marmor fā* ‘carve in marble’ or ‘get hold of marble’, and **fakrimi** as *fā Grīmi* ‘carve for Grim’, ‘carve for the chieftain’ or ‘give to the chieftain/Grim’. The word *marmor* is probably however a late borrowing and therefore requires a dative ending in the expression ‘carve in marble’, for which reason this interpretation must be viewed with caution. It seems possible to endorse Nordén’s interpretation of the runic sequences 38–44 **rstikfr** and 50–57 **ristikfrā** as *rīsti ek* ‘I carve/carved’ or ‘may I carve’. The runes **fr** and **frā** may represent the prep. *frā*, *frān* ‘from’. This is reminiscent of the Solberga inscription, which as interpreted by Gustavson (2017) contains the following phrase: *purs ik fa hin þrihufþa hin miramultika fran mans kunu* ‘I drive the troll away, the three-headed, the earthly, from the man’s woman’. I instead interpret this line as ‘I carve the three-headed troll, covered with crushed earth, from the man’s woman’.

The inscription thus does appear to be in Old Swedish and in my opinion is deserving of a renewed attempt at interpretation. There is however no room for this in this book.

4.8 Sigtuna plate 2 (U AST1;166 M), Uppland

The plate was found in the ‘Humlegården’ block during preliminary investigations for the construction of a house in 1927. The excavations were led by Gunnar Gihl (1927a–b). He reports that the cultural layer was c. 2 metres deep and very disturbed. The plate, like a further plate (Sigtuna plate 3), was found at a depth of c. 1.5 metres (Gihl 1927b:6); unfortunately, no more precise description of the find context was provided. The plate is 82 mm long, 19–22 mm wide and c. 0.7 mm thick. It is similar in shape to Sigtuna plate 1 but narrower in width and lacking a hole (Figure 28). The plate is now kept at Sigtuna Museum with the inventory number SF 1305:2.

The plate was folded in the middle when found. Although it has been straightened out, it is not completely flat but retains a crooked shape. I consider the plate as type C although I am uncertain whether the folding was deliberate. The inscription covers the two sides and both are divided into three rows. Row 2 on the A-side is only half filled, as is row 2 on the B-side. Row 3 on side B contains only three strokes.

Nordén regards the inscription as mediaeval due to his belief that he can identify **æ**-runes therein. He also sees several dotted runes: **e**, **y**, **g** and **d**, as

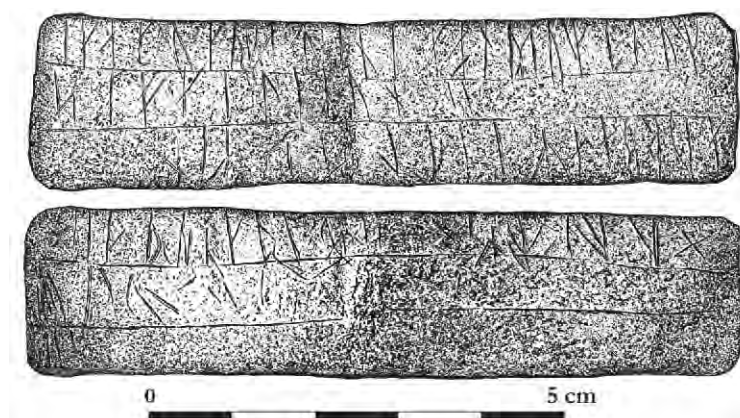


Figure 28. Sigtuna plate 2. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

well as seven bind-runes; of these, only five are marked in his transliteration (1943:160), but I mark all seven in my reproduction of the transliteration below:

Side A

Row 1: **ik·ak·uk·risdū·i·uegonþr·tunġlnum**

Row 2: **sifgeuinum ||**

Row 3: **oyrpætange · æupþæt skin**

Side B

Row 1: **× ek · þ · sig þrio × nauþrniu ||**

Row 2: **uiurnank**

Ik ak uk. Ris du i vägh onþr tunġlnum sifgefnum!

Ör þät, ange! Öþ þät, skin!

Ek sigh þurs þrio, nauþer niu.

Viur nank.

ik ak uk. Raise yourself up and away under the benevolent stars!

Make this crazy, mist! Destroy this, shine!

I say three trolls, nine needs.

In the capacity of viur I practise the spell.³⁴⁰

Nordén's reading of side B includes staveless runes, coordinate runes and a runic ideograph **þ**, which represents the word *þurs* 'ogre, troll'. This combina-

³⁴⁰ “*ik ak uk. Höj dig upp och bort under stjärnorna de välvilliga! / Gör detta galenskapsfullt, ånga! Förinta det, sken! / Jag säger tre þurs, nio nöder. / I egenskap av viur utövar jag besvärjelsen.*”

tion – together with the particularly heavy weathering of the metal on this side – makes this part of the inscription the hardest to read. But it is also here that Nordén recognises the phrase ‘I say three trolls, nine needs’ which, according to Gustavson (2014:8), allows him to assume that the inscription is composed in Old Swedish.

Gustavson (2014:2) suggests the following transliteration of the inscription:

Side A

Row 1 (A): **ikakukris-i[u]iko-þ̄rtum-num**

Row 3 (B): **[o]yrþælamiæ---tskin**

Row 2 (C): **sifg-ūinu-m ||**

Side B

Row 1 (A): **[||] × ikþsikþrio × [nøþ]-r ni- [||]**

Row 2 (B): **| ui-----...**

Row 3 (C):

Gustavson’s careful and detailed report proved very useful when I examined the plate. He identifies fewer bind-runes than Nordén and no dotted **d**-rune, but his assumption that the inscription contains the rune **[ø]**, which he reconstructs with the help of Nordén’s photographs, dates the inscription to later in the mediaeval period. Gustavson also alters the reading order for rows 2 and 3 on side A:

The inscription on the obverse begins with row A in the upper left corner and is read through to the upper right corner. The plate must then be turned 180 degrees and inscription (B) be read clockwise from the upper left corner through to the right corner. The runes have their tops against the long sides. The plate must thereafter be turned a further half revolution. The inscription (C) carved between the framing lines is read from left to right.³⁴¹

The inscription on the reverse does not however require the same rotation of 180 degrees, despite also being divided into three rows. Was the carver inconsistent? Or should we instead regard the reading order on the reverse as an indication that row 2 should be read after row 1 on the obverse as well? The most natural order on the back side is to read row 1 from left to right and then row 2 in the same way. Row 2 is only half filled with runes, like row 2 on the A-side (‘C’ in Gustavson’s transliteration). More justification for Gustavson’s reading order on side A would have been provided if the carver had instead continued with row 3 on side B by turning the plate clockwise: I therefore choose to follow the reading order suggested by Nordén.

³⁴¹ “Framsíðans inskrift börjar með rad A í övra vænstra hörnet og læses fram till övra högra hörnet. Blecket fãr dãrefter vridas 180 grader och inskriften (B) læses dã medsols frã det övra vænstra hörnet fram till högra hörnet. Runorna stãr med topparna mot lãngsidorna. Dãrefter fãr blecket vãndas ytterligare ett halvt varv. Den mellan begrãnsningslinjerna ristade inskriften (C) læses frã vänster till hãger.”

I have examined the plate four times (September 2009, October 2014 and twice in October 2015), and my transliteration is as follows (commentary is found in the catalogue, no 25):

Side A:

Row 1: **ikakukristuīnikonūrtūminum**

Row 2: **sifgīlinu-**¹

Row 3: **oyrpælamī-----šķin**

Side B:

Row 1: **[||]× iāpşikrist × ----r[ŋ]ihī ×**

Row 2: **uilrnānŕ**

Row 3: **||**¹

4.8.1 Discussion

It is not easy to determine whether the inscription is written in Old Swedish or Latin. Elisabeth Svärdström suggests that the introductory part is in Latin, but does not specify how it should be interpreted. Gustavson cautiously suggests the rhyme *hic, haec, hoc* but is unsuccessful in finding further Latin words in the inscription. During the 22nd International Meeting of Field Runologists, held 11–13 September 2009 in Sigtuna (Källström 2010a:121), participants were nonetheless able to confirm that “the inscription seems to contain Latin words [...]. The runic sequences **kristu** *Christo* and **tūminum** *Dominum* could be discerned, among others.”³⁴²

Barnes (2012:122) states that runic Latin inscriptions can show great variation in quality (cf. also Gustavson 1994a:320 f.):

The quality of ‘runic Latin’ varies considerably, from good to indifferent or downright poor. A number of inscriptions are in what is termed ‘pseudo-Latin’, sequences that suggest Latin words and inflections, but which make no obvious sense. Some of these may have been written out of ignorance, others by people – with or without proper knowledge of the language – trying to harness magic powers. Much depends on context.

It is thus possible that the inscription on Sigtuna plate 2 is such an example of a kind of pseudo-Latin with misunderstood or garbled Latin words. It is nonetheless worth noting that my new reading of the inscription recognises the two-fold occurrence of the name *Christ(us)* (in row 1 on side A and in row 1 on side B), as well as the word *Dominum* (acc.) ‘Lord’ (row 1 on side A) and perhaps a modifying adjective or pronoun in the runic sequence **nūrt**. The most obvious choice is perhaps the adj. *nostr(um)* ‘our’. This word was often abbreviated in

³⁴² “inskriften tycks innehålla latinska ord [...]. Bl.a. kunde runföljderna **kristu** *Christo* och **tūminum** *Dominum* urskiljas.”

Latin writing, although less often in runic inscriptions with Latin prayers or formulas. Examples of abbreviated writing can be found, however, e.g. *pater noster* on G 372 is written as **batrnoŕ**.

There are also other Latin words which might fit. The initial sequence **ikakukristū** can for example be read as *ego cum Christo* ‘I with Christ’; the **m**-rune in *cum* may have been left out in front of the **k**-rune. This rarely happens in runic inscriptions in Latin but there are examples of similar omissions of nasal consonants; *sancti* is written as **sakti** on G 278, for instance, although this example is not quite analogous. Nasal consonants are involved in both cases, but /m/ is not homorganic with /k/. The fact that /o/ in *ego* is represented by the **a**-rune is also somewhat problematic. It is however possible that this is a result of the carver’s faltering sound analysis or deficient knowledge of Latin.

A verb may also be identified in the introduction in the runic sequence **uiniko**, which may be understood as *vinco* – 1 pers. sg. pres. ind. ‘win, conquer’. The second **i**-rune can be explained as a svarabhakti vowel which the carver inserted between /n/ and /k/. Here we may see echoes of First Corinthians 15:57, which reads in the Vulgate: *Deo autem gratias, qui dedit nobis victoriam per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum* ‘But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (cf. also the words of Constantine the Great on his vision of the cross and the Christ monogram in the account of his conversion: *in hoc signo vincis* ‘in this sign you will win’). It thus does not appear impossible that phrases such as *ego cum Christo vinco* ‘I conquer with Christ’ could flourish in Uppland in the twelfth and thirteenth century, even if I am unable to find direct parallels.

It is also possible to interpret the introduction as **ikakukristūini** *ego cum Christo veni* ‘I came/have come with Christ’. It is nonetheless still somewhat problematic that *nostr(um) dominum* is not in the same case as *Christo*; *nostro domino* would in fact be expected. The sentence ‘I win with Christ, our Lord’ could however conceivably be the introduction to a protective formula. This interpretation can be cautiously accepted if we consider a rune-carver with an imperfect knowledge of Latin.

It is thus very possible that the beginning of the inscription contains Latin words, and with some effort one can also recognise Old Swedish words in the introduction. I do not however discern the phrase ‘I say three trolls, nine needs’ on the reverse of the inscription. The interpretation by Nördén, and this phrase in particular, has been generally accepted in runic studies, and we encounter references to it, for example, in *Gotlands runinskrifter* 3, G 361. Gustavson (2014:8) further observes that the inscription is composed in Old Swedish since the resemblance of the phrase to that on Sigtuna plate 1 is “striking”³⁴³. This argument founders with my new reading. There are nevertheless a further two reasons that he considers the inscription to be in

³⁴³ “slående”

Swedish, namely the plate's typological similarity with Sigtuna plate 1 as well as the occurrence of staveless runes and twig runes, which are otherwise not attested in runic inscriptions in Latin. These are strong arguments. I therefore assume that the inscription may contain both Latin and Swedish. It should be considered certain that the inscription is lexical, or at least partly so.

5 Uninterpreted runic plates from Sweden

kut : ir : rapa : if · piet · uiti · hūat · ...

Gutt er rāða, ef þet viti, hvat ...

‘It is good to interpret, if one knows, what ...’

G 393

Twenty-two runic plates currently without linguistic interpretation have been found in Swedish territory north of Scania. Eleven of these have a suspension hole (type A), three lack holes (type B), four are rolled or folded (type C) and four are fragmentary. The runic plates are listed below in typological order and according to province within each type.

5.1 Uninterpreted A-type plates

5.1.1 The Leksand plate (D Fv1984;250), Dalarna

This bronze plate was discovered in 1983 during archaeological excavations for Highway 70 in Yttermo, Leksand parish, Dalarna. Some of these excavations took place in area D (the working area on the side of the district settlement, RAÄ-no Leksand 985:1), where six graves containing the skeletons of five adults and one child were found, all lying with their heads to the west (Ersgård & al. 1983:39). The plate was discovered in one of these graves (complex D 11). The graves had been marked above the ground with a kind of wooden construction, of which only a large number of post-holes remained (Ersgård 1997:45–47). All the graves bar the child’s contained objects, although the grave with the plate contained only a knife in addition to this and the skeleton (Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1984:250).³⁴⁴ Ersgård & al. (1983:39) note that the other graves contained “grave goods [...] both many and varied”,³⁴⁵ which is not typical of Christian graves. The burial arrangement was otherwise “strongly influenced by Christianity, as people in the early Middle Ages did not usually cremate their dead. Even resting the head to the west to watch the rising sun is an indication of this” (p. 39).³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Leif Karlenby (1985:50), referring to Ersgård & al. (1983:41), writes that the Leksand plate was found in “en annars fyndtom grav” (‘a grave otherwise devoid of finds’). Ersgård & al., however, state that the plate was found in a “i övrigt nästan fyndtom grav” (‘grave otherwise almost devoid of finds’). The grave thus contained only a knife and a plate.

³⁴⁵ “gravgåvorna [...] både många och varierande”

³⁴⁶ “starkt påverkat av kristendomen, då man i tidig medeltid inte brukade kremuera den döde. Även att vila huvudet i väst för att se den uppgående solen är ett tecken på detta”.

One of the five adult graves was conclusively identified as female (D 7). Two graves were identified as male and analysis of the dental material using the carbon-14 method dates them to the period 660–930 (complexes 9 and 10, Ersgård 1997:24, 138).³⁴⁷ The grave goods of these same graves include axes of a type typologically dated from the second half of the tenth to the eleventh century (p. 24), and the graves have thus been dated to the tenth century.

I have not been able to find specific information on the reasons for dating the grave containing the plate to the eleventh or twelfth century (cf. Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1984:250). Carbon-14 dating has not been carried out on this grave as far as I understand (only two tests have been done on the two graves containing axes). Inga Serning has dated all the graves in this area to the eleventh or twelfth century “on the basis of certain datable material such as the axes and the coins” (Ersgård 1997:47).³⁴⁸ The grave with the plate may thus be older or younger since it did not contain such datable objects. Nor have I been able to clarify whether this was a male or female grave. Ersgård & al. (1983:41) write that “the combination [of grave goods] in the male graves comprised axes, fire steels, flint and in one case a knife”.³⁴⁹ Ersgård (1997:46–47) later states that “[in] the female graves objects such as pearl necklaces, buckles, arm rings, ringed pins and knives could occur. Axes, a knife, fire steels, arrowheads and a comb were found in the male graves”.³⁵⁰ A review of the find categories from area D (Syse 1996:46) clearly shows that three knives were found in the graves. How the grave with the plate and the knife was identified thus appears unclear.

The most interesting aspect of the plate’s archaeological context is its position on the forehead. It seems improbable that the plate ended up in the grave in the deceased’s clothes or as a pendant on the body; rather, it seems to have been deliberately placed there in some kind of burial ritual. Of interest is that the plate is the oldest runic object from Dalarna.

The plate has a round suspension hole (Figure 29) with a diameter of c. 5 mm. It is 39–41 mm long, 15–17 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. It is now kept at Dalarna Museum (Falun) with the inventory number 20152:216. The inscription runs over both sides. The lines on the obverse have been read in three ways, by Thorgunn Snædal Brink (in Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1984), Helmer Gustavson (2009b) and Fanny Agåker (2010). Snædal Brink (p. 250) provides a transliteration of only one side and regards the other as containing “rune-like signs of which none can be conclusively typologically identified”.³⁵¹

A: **kuia-**

B: ----

³⁴⁷ The carbon-14 dates for complexes 9 and 10 in D provided by Syse (1996:63) are slightly later: c. 660–970.

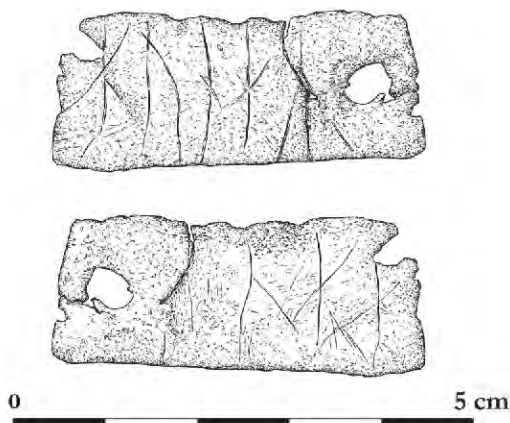
³⁴⁸ “utifrån vissa daterande material som yxorna samt mynten”

³⁴⁹ “[k]ombinationen [av gravgåvor] i mansgravarna bestod av yxa, eldstål, flinta och i ett fall en kniv”

³⁵⁰ “I kvinnogravarna kunde förekomma ting som pärlhalsband, spännbucklor, armring, ringnål och kniv. I mansgravarna fanns yxa, kniv, eldstål, pilspetsar och kam.”

³⁵¹ “runliknande tecken av vilka inget kan med säkerhet typbestämmas”

Figure 29. The Leksand plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.



Helmer Gustavson (2009b) also investigated the runic plate in 2009 but states erroneously in his report that it is of unknown provenance. Gustavson (2009b) reads the inscription on both sides and discerns no rune-like signs therein.

A (B in Snædal Brink's transliteration): **α---**

B (A in Snædal Brink's transliteration): **-ui--**

Agåker (2010:80) transliterates only one of the sides (the obverse in Snædal Brink's transliteration): **auia**. Although she considers this "well known from other amuletic inscriptions", she does not explain which word she is referring to. If she means the proto-Norse word **auja**, considerations of language history make this an impossible suggestion.

I examined the plate in July of 2009 and suggest the following transliteration (see comments in the catalogue, no 16):

A: **ḱunarr**

B: **α--α**

I similarly recognise no rune-like signs in the inscription, and believe that it comprises runes which due to the sweeping strokes of the carver are difficult to discern typologically, particularly on the B-side.

My new reading of the obverse allows a tentative interpretation of the inscription, specifically the name *Gunnarr*. It is however unusual for this name to be carved with the yew-rune (𐌿) late in the eleventh or the twelfth century as the assimilation of /r/ in personal names ending in *-arr* had been designated by the *reið*-rune (ᚱ) from an early date (Larsson 2002:36–40). The yew-rune has certainly been regarded as occurring in this name on the Viking-Age stone Ög 201, but there is probably a specific reason for the use of the **r**-rune in this instance (see Källström 2005:13). The name was moreover carved with the *reið*-rune as early as the ninth century (Ög N288).

There is nevertheless evidence that the name could be carved with the yew-rune in the twelfth century, namely **kunar** on a runestone fragment, U Fv1971;213A (Pr 5). This late rendition can be explained as “an indication that the two *r*-sounds were on the point of coalescing” (Larsson 2002:38).³⁵² It is in any case possible to encounter this and other anthroponyms ending in *arr* being written with the yew-rune in the eleventh and twelfth century (p. 134), during the period when the *r*-sounds were merging. I therefore assume the interpretation is possible, despite the initially unexpected yew-rune, although it must be considered with caution, since three of the five runes are somewhat uncertain (see the catalogue, no 16). As further support for the interpretation, it is worth noting that additional cases of the placement of mediaeval runic plates which name the deceased on the forehead include a lead plate from Skänninge (Ög UVÖst2009:5;45), carved for a woman named Igulfrid and found in a grave in the yard of St. Olof’s Convent. The archaeologist Hanna Menander (2011:33) describes the find circumstances as follows:

The soil in which the plate was found contained bones from an older disturbed grave. Osteological analysis of these bones shows that they come from a woman who was 163 cm tall and who died aged 35–40 years old. The woman is presumably the Igulfrid named on the plate. The plate was probably cross-shaped before it was damaged over the course of time. A dark imprint on the cranium of the woman indicates that it was laid on her forehead in connection with the burial.³⁵³

The Leksand plate is thus not unique in this regard and should possibly be dated to the twelfth century rather than to the eleventh or earlier.

5.1.2 The Hovgård plate (U NOR1994;26A), Uppland

A bronze plate³⁵⁴ was found in 1993 during archaeological excavations at Alsnö House in Adelsö parish, Uppland. The plate was found in disturbed cultural layers at a distance of approximately 3 metres from runestone U 11 (RAÄ-no Adelsö 252) in trench 7 (Brunstedt 1996:37 f.). Several trenches were examined in connection with the runestone, revealing stone constructions connected with the harbour location. Trench 7 had an undisturbed cultural layer (below the stone-packing of the terrace), whose finds included large unburnt bones and a silver coin struck in 796/97. The other layers had been disturbed, and the plate was found here above the stone-packing. Finds in this trench were rich and included, in addition to the plate, a Viking-Age iron buckle, six Is-

³⁵² “ett tecken på att de två *r*-ljuden höll på att sammanfalla”

³⁵³ “Jordmassorna som blecket hittades i innehöll ben från en äldre söndergrävd grav. Den osteologiska analysen av dessa ben visar att de kommer från en kvinna som var 163 cm lång och som dog vid en ålder av 35–40 år. Kvinnan är antagligen den på blecket namngivna Igulfrid. Blecket har troligtvis varit korsformat innan det skadats av tidens tand. Ett mörkt avtryck på kvinnans kranium antyder att det lagts på hennes panna i samband med begravningen.”

³⁵⁴ Gustavson discusses a *copper* plate (1994d:279), but in every other context the plate is stated to be made of bronze.

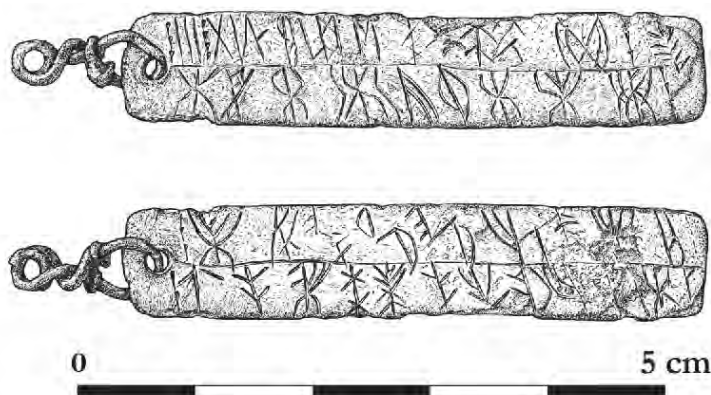


Figure 30. The Hovgård plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

lamic silver coins (some from the late eighth century, some from the middle of the tenth century), Viking-Age pearls (of glass, carnelian and gold foil), Viking-Age and mediaeval ceramic fragments as well as a gilded bronze mount dated with some uncertainty to the fourteenth century (Brunstedt p. 38 f.). Further finds attested to the presence of crafts. The conclusion for this and other trenches was that “the finds could have been brought to the harbour through secondary earth movement or land planning, but it nevertheless seems logical that there was some form of settlement connected with the harbour in consideration of the relatively homogenous find material and the indications of crafts” (quoted from FMIS Adelsö 252; see also Brunstedt 1996:45).³⁵⁵ The general dating is from 700 to the older Middle Ages.

The findplace of Alsnö House is thus of particular interest. Archaeologists specifically discuss the *Birka–Adelsö-complex*, since the find location is closely linked with Björkö. The fact that a further two early runic plates come from Björkö (see below) supports the idea of a connection between the two places.

The plate can probably be dated to the early Viking Age and shows similarities with the oldest plates in the corpus (the Hallbjäns plate, the Gorodišče plates and the Ladoga plate), and I therefore date it to the ninth or tenth century. It is 50 mm long, 9 mm wide and c. 1 mm thick. A silver wire twisted into a loop passes through its round hole (Snædal 1997). It is kept at SHM under inventory number 35224.

Snædal (1997; see also Gustavson 2000c) suggests that the inscription comprises rune-like signs or types of cryptic runes and that some signs are of an incidental nature. She observes similarities between this plate and the Gorodišče

³⁵⁵ “Fynden kan ha förts till hamnen genom sekundär jordomflyttning eller markplanering, men [det] förefaller emellertid logiskt att någon form av bebyggelse funnits i anslutning till hamnen med tanke på det relativt homogena fyndmaterialet och indikationerna på hantverk.”

plates and the Roskilde plate and concludes with a suggestion about the appearance of special ‘amulet runes’:

One almost suspects the use of special ‘amulet runes’ which could have existed alongside the usual runic alphabet. The similarities between the signs are too great to be purely coincidental.³⁵⁶

The plate has been transliterated by Jan Owe in SRD on the basis of Thorgunn Snædal’s preliminary sketch (found in Gustavson 2000c and 1994c:26):

A: : iii : -sk : isi-n ¶ th-o----

B: -k-o-ptouf--- ¶ t-----f-

The initial impression, namely that the runes on the Hovgård plate comprise rune-like signs and that the inscription is not lexical, disappears when one considers how the runic forms can be read. The inscription runs over two sides (with two rows on each side) and contains conventional and unconventional runes as well as introductory and concluding signs (Figure 30). Supporting the possibility of the inscription being encrypted is the presence of conventional runes and punctuation marks. These punctuation marks indicate a reading sequence for the inscription: the mark decorated with dots :|||: might signal the introduction. The form of the dots in the other punctuation marks shows that the second line of the obverse as well as the two rows of the reverse should be read from left to right.

I examined the plate on two occasions, in July of 2009 and October of 2014, and attempt a reading in the catalogue (no 17). I can however offer no interpretation. My transliteration is as follows:

A 1: :|||: -kabātm̃lātō-þ : þ-

2: ʀ-þum̃uþʀfū-:

B 1: :---þs-þfs--b

2: : tþforōfuk̃nm̃akaōþ---ʀk

The runes of the inscription, while not hard to discern, are very difficult to identify, since many of them are extremely unconventional. Some, however, can be recognised from other encrypted inscriptions, such as the Gorodišče plates, the Ladoga plate and the Rök stone (Ög 136), while a number of forms are unique. There are simultaneously a number of conventional runes (**k**, **a**, **b**, **t**). There are runic forms which might be balanced (an older **m**-rune, for example, and **ʀ** or **m** and **þ** in the form of balanced runes, which are the same forms as those on the Ladoga plate). The inscription may also have balanced bind-runes (like the Ladoga plate and the Gorodišče plates).

Typologically and runographically, the inscription shows similarities with the Gorodišče plates, as has already been observed, but also with the Deerness plate.

³⁵⁶ “Man anar nästan användningen av speciella ’amuletrunor’ som kan ha existerat vid sidan av det vanliga runalfabetet. Likheterna mellan tecknen är för stora för att vara rena tillfälligheter.”

5.1.3 Björkö plates 1 and 2 (U NOR2002;26 and U NOR2002;28 respectively), Uppland

Two bronze plates were discovered in 2002 in the Garrison on Birka during an excavation carried out by the Archaeological Research Laboratory (ARL) of the Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University. A few words must first be said about the find location of the Garrison, a place yielding an unusually high number of weapon finds. The most interesting aspect of the weapon finds from this place is that they comprise objects used by people while they were alive (rather than grave goods). Many bits of armour have also been found, as well as weapons (spearheads) placed as sacrifices for building. According to Kitzler (2000:13–21) and Hedenstierna-Jonson (2006: 64 f.), the archaeological findings of the Garrison indicate a connection with the worship of Odin.

The Garrison camp was probably attacked by hostile warriors and burned down, presumably with the help of flaming arrows (Holmquist 2010). A central building in the Garrison was a hall which is called the House of Warriors. The archaeologist and project leader Lena Holmquist describes it in the following way (2010:200):

The most striking building in the area was a 19 × 10 m high building intended for profane and ritual gatherings, the so-called House of Warriors. [- - -] There is no real doubt that the House of Warriors was intended to give the impression of power and status. It was a building which in view of its large size was visible from a great distance, not least from the sea. Burning down such a large and ceremonial building would have brought great prestige to the enemy who had penetrated the very heart of the organisation.³⁵⁷

The events which took place at the House of Warriors are somewhat reminiscent of those occurring in Staraja Ladoga at approximately the same time with another large building which presumably also had a cultic function (Petrenko 1985:111 f.). The building in Staraja Ladoga in which the Ladoga plate was found was razed and burnt at the end of the tenth century (Petrenko & Kuz'menko 1979:79–81). A necklace with three Thor's hammers was also found in the building, by the left wall, in addition to the Ladoga plate.

As far as the Björkö plates are concerned, their origin might just be the House of Warriors: the plates turned up in re-filled masses from Holger Arbman's excavations in the 1930s, and they can therefore be archaeologically dated to the tenth century. Lena Holmquist clarified, in a personal email message (27 November, 2015), considerations of the plates' possible dating and origin: "I would date the Birka plates to the tenth century. There are several phases [of

³⁵⁷ "Den mest iögonfallande byggnaden i området har varit ett 19 × 10 m stort hus avsett för profana och rituella sammankomster, det s.k. Krigarnas hus. [- - -] Att Krigarnas hus varit avsett att ge intryck av makt och status råder det nog inget tvivel om. Det har varit en byggnad som med sin stora volym varit synlig på långt håll, inte minst från sjösidan. Att bränna ned en så stor byggnad med cer[er]monifunktioner var att uppnå stor prestigevinst för fienden eftersom man nått in i själva organisationens hjärta."

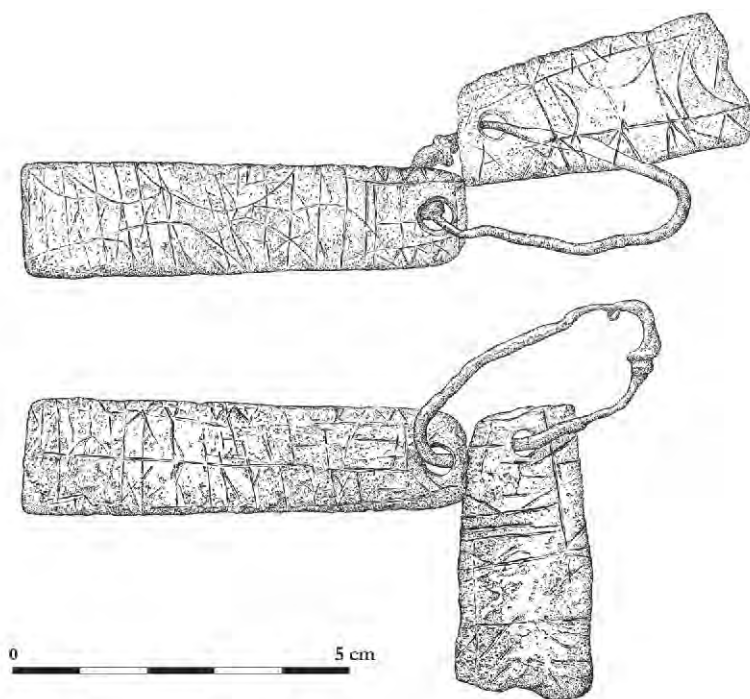


Figure 31. Björkö plates 1 and 2. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

occupation] in the Garrison but I would say that these belong to the final phase: the same as the hall or ‘House of Warriors’. [- - -] We found Arbman’s 1 metre wide trench in the house and this is where the plates were discovered.”³⁵⁸

The plates are joined by a metal wire (Figure 31). The first plate is 33 mm long, 6–7 mm wide and 0.9 mm thick; the second is 21 mm long, 8–9.5 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. They are currently in the keeping of ARL and are there identified with the find number 7038 (RAÄ no-35). The inscriptions have been examined by Helmer Gustavson (2002b, 2004b and 2009a), whose transliteration is as follows (2004b:26–28):

1.

A: **arsiarþir-+þai**

B: **miri-þ ʀ ...i....-fri-kþk-**

2.

A: **þpiu**

B: **if**

³⁵⁸ “Birkablecken skulle jag datera till 900-talet. I Garnisonen finns flera faser men jag skulle säga att dessa tillhör den sista fasen: samma som hallhuset eller ”Krigarnas hus”. [- - -] I huset påträffade vi Arbman’s 1 meter breda schakt och det var i det som blecken kom fram.”

I examined the plates in September of 2015 and give the following transliteration (all relevant comments and pictures are in the catalogue, nos 18 and 19 respectively):

1.

A: **ḡaraṡarir+ḡoi**

B: --ṡṡ-ḡ---+¶ ...-...-ṡ-ukḡ---

2.

A: **ḡḡ-ṡ**

B: +

Both plates are covered with ornamental lines, of which a number have rune-like character (they are somewhat reminiscent of **m** and **r**-runes). This complicates the reading, as does the condition of the plates, since the surfaces are heavily covered in verdigris, particularly along the edges. It can be noted that plate 1 in my reading has the short-twig runes **b**, **o** and possibly **a**. On both sides of the plate is a cross-shaped punctuation mark with small strokes on its four points, and the same punctuation mark also occurs on plate 2. The sequence of runes on the obverse of plate 1 indicates that the inscription there could be lexical, but I can suggest no interpretation.

5.1.4 The Villberga plate (U AST1;174), Uppland

The copper plate was bought in 1928 by the Prehistoric Museum of Uppsala University. The vendor, a man (?) by the name of Björk,³⁵⁹ stated that he himself had bought the plate in Villberga, Uppland (Nordén 1943:173). The find-place is thus completely unknown. The plate is broken into two pieces, and Nordén's suggestion (1943:173) that the plate may have been deliberately folded is, I believe, wrong (see my comments in the catalogue, no 33). The plate has a suspension hole and is thus considered as type A (Figure 32). It is kept at the Museum of Nordic Archaeology (*Museum Gustavianum*, Uppsala) with the inventory number 5506:28.

The inscription covers the front and back sides but the inscription on the reverse, almost entirely lost, is reconstructed with the help of the obverse. Although Otto von Friesen was the first to attempt a reading for this plate, his reading was never published and can only be found in his notebook IX, p. 174 (UUB NS 526: 1); see figure 33.6 in the catalogue. He transliterates the inscription as follows:

A: **rhisrtrhri ¶ frhisrtrhri ¶ frhisrtqrh +**

B: traces of runes

Dating the plate to the Middle Ages (fourteenth century) on account of its **s**-rune forms, von Friesen suggests that the inscription either lacks linguistic meaning or else constitutes an anagram of *Christ*.

³⁵⁹ The first name is not recorded by Nordén (1943).

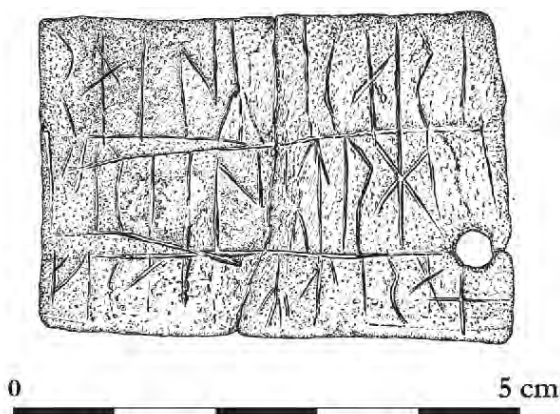


Figure 32. The Villberga plate: side A. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Nordén (1943:174) examined the inscription some years later and transliterated it as follows:

A: **rhisrtrhri ¶ frhisrtrhri ¶ frhisrtrh +**

B: **rhisrtrh + ¶ rhisrtrhri ¶ frhisrtrhri**

I examined the plate twice in February of 2015. My transliteration of side A differs from that of von Friesen in one detail only; I can see no **α**-rune in line 3 (nor can Nordén). My transliteration of side B differs from Nordén's in a small number of details; I transliterate line 1 on side B as ...**h̥isrtrh +**; I begin the line with three dots; I discern no **r** in the middle of the line but rather **ṛ**; and I consider the punctuation mark to be uncertain.

Since the plate is completely lacking in archaeological dating, it cannot be determined whether the ***r**-rune should be read as **h** or **α**. Nordén suggests the latter as an alternative reading. Typologically, the plate does not resemble the earliest runic plates in the corpus (the plates from Hallbjäns, Ulvsunda and Ladoga). Its **h̥**-runes might therefore represent /æ(:)/, /e(:)/ or /i(:)/, since a dating to the late Viking or early Middle Ages seems more likely than the early Viking Age. The other runes on the plate are of Viking-Age type, so there seem to be no reasons to date it to the mediaeval period (as von Friesen does) or to read **h̥** as /y(:)/. The yew-rune could however be used for the vowels /æ(:)/, /e(:)/ or /i(:)/ in the East Norse area as early as the end of the Viking Age (see Larsson 2002:155 f.).

Nordén (1943:174) reveals that he attempted to read the plate as a transposition cipher without reaching any satisfactory result. He therefore concludes that the inscription evidences letter magic, i.e. that its runes were not intended to convey a linguistic message but were used as magical signs.

In the reading variant with the **α**-rune, Nordén does however succeed in producing an interpretation based on the words Oícel. *frestr* 'delay', **hrestr* 'refreshment?' and dat. f. of adj. *þrár* 'stubborn, obstinate'. He thus achieves (p.

174) the rhyme: *hrestr þrári, frestr þrári* ‘encouragement for the obstinate one, deferral (of the final decision) for the obstinate one’.³⁶⁰ This interpretation is, however, beset with several weaknesses. To obtain the words *frestr þrári*, one must operate with a reversal of the runes **r** and **t** in the sequence **fraisrt** as well as read the **t**-rune first as /t/ in *frestr* and subsequently as /p/ i *þrári*, which seems unlikely. The words *hrestr þrári* similarly operate with the reversal and loss of runes, and here the **þ**-rune should apparently first be read as /h/ and subsequently as /a/. Nordén (p. 175) regards the suggestion as no more than a “thought experiment” which is so “daring” that he prefers his idea of letter magic.³⁶¹ I have therefore included the plate in the group of uninterpreted inscriptions.

At first glance, the inscription does appear non-lexical, although as all of its lines contain minor variations of the same runic sequence, the idea of a rhyme or perhaps rather a word game is not completely unreasonable. I segment the runic sequences to make them easier to identify:

Line 1: **r hi srtr hri**

Line 2: **fr hi srtr hri**

Line 3: **fr hi srtr h +**

The changes consist of the removal of either one rune at the beginning of the sequence or one or two runes at its end. If we read side A in the order in which the sequences decrease in size, we must first read line 2 (which is the most complete), followed by line 3, which is missing two runes at the end, and then line 1, which is missing one rune at the beginning of the sequence. The reading of the A-side is thus:

frhisrtrhrifrhisrtrhrhisrtrhri

1 5 10 15 20 25 30

Augmenting the difficulty in all the attempts to interpret the inscription is the absence of any vowel runes apart from the **i**-rune, as well as the three-fold repetition of the consonant group **rh**. The situation changes if, however, we allow ourselves to read the **r**-runes as representing /i/. It is then possible to identify the verb runSw. *sitia* in the 2 or 3 pers. sg. pres. ind., *sitr*, in the thrice-repeated runic sequence **srtr** (rr. 5–8, 16–19 and 24–27). It is not impossible for the rune **h** to represent /i/, and further examples can even be found in Uppland: *Ingi-frīðar* **rkkrkriþnr**, *Viða* **urþa**, *ærfingi* **irfrkr** and *æftir* **iftrr** on U 60, *Viðbiörn* **urþbian** on U 537, *Vīga* **uriha** and *Vīgdiafrk* **urhtarf** on U 573 and *Vīhialm* **urhralm** on U 590³⁶² (cf. Larsson’s discussion of the use of the **r**-rune for vowels in 2002:138–145).

³⁶⁰ ‘uppeggelse till den motsträviga, anstånd (med det slutgiltiga avgörandet) åt den motsträviga’

³⁶¹ “tankeexperiment”, “äventyrligt”

³⁶² It is however possible according to Stille (1999:139, fn. 42) that the runestones U 537, U 573 and U 590 are the work of the same carver.

One might further identify a word corresponding to the OIcel. adj. *hrífr* ‘willing’ (*Norrøn ordbok*)³⁶³ in the runic sequence **hrifr**, which occurs twice (rr. 9–13 and rr. 28–2). The repeated runic sequence **srtr hrifr** can thus be interpreted as ‘sits willingly’.

The runic sequence **hrh** (20–22) is however problematic. One could plausibly regard **hrhis** (20–24) as a counterpart to OIcel. *hress*, which means ‘hale, hearty, in good spirits’ (*Norrøn ordbok*)³⁶⁴ and which would correspond extraordinarily well to the first adjective. In that case, however, we must identify a carving error in the extra **h**-rune. In the runic sequence **frhis** (12–16) we might possibly recognise a counterpart to the OIcel. noun *fress* m. ‘tomcat, bear’, which would accord well with the adj. *hrífr* and *hress*, but here again we are forced to operate with an extra **h**-rune. Such solutions seem to be too forced. I nevertheless consider that the inscription is probably lexical and presumably contains a kind of repeated formula.

5.1.5 The Sunnerby plate (no signature), Västergötland

In 2012, during archaeological excavations in Sunnerby on the island of Kållandsö (RAÄ Otterstad 386), a metal detector unearthed a find consisting of a copper plate with runic signs on both sides (Sunnerby 9:1, site RAÄ no 57, find no 299). The findplace can be characterised as a residential area. The plate is fragmentary (Figure 33), but the remaining part has a suspension hole, allowing it to be classified as type A. The fragment is 23 mm long, 22–23 mm wide and 0.8 mm thick. The plate is currently in the keeping of the Väner Museum (*Vänermuseet*) although a future move to the Museum of Västergötland is planned (email from Annelie Nitenberg, 18 April, 2017).

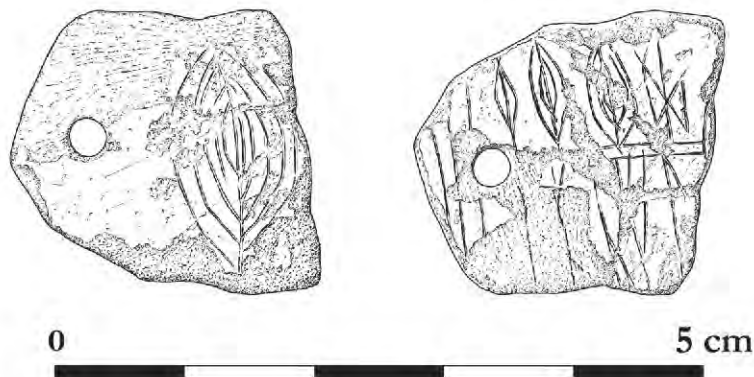


Figure 33. The Sunnerby plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on sketches and photographs by the author.

³⁶³ ‘villig, raust, flus’

³⁶⁴ ‘frisk, før, kvik, glad’

The plate has been studied by Magnus Källström (2014b), whose report describes and analyses the runic signs and suggests the following transliteration of the inscription:

A: -...

B: -----... ¶ ---fl...

An attempted transliteration of the plate's unconventional runes might nevertheless run as follows:

A: ...

B: ... ¶ ---fl...

I have not examined the plate myself but base my commentary entirely on Källström's report and photographs (the drawing is also based on the photographs and my comments). A certain symmetry is observable in the inscription: the number of bows for the **p**-runes in line 1 on side B increases with every rune. Similarly symmetrical elements likewise in conjunction with **p**-runes are found on Sigtuna plate 5, the Roskilde plate, Solberga plate 1 and possibly also on the Söllested Church amulet (DR DKSyd15). Källström (2014b:4) suggests that the first three runes in line 2 of the inscription might be coordinate runes (twig runes) to be read as **t**, **n** and **p**. I am not convinced that these are coordinate runes but prefer to consider them as bind-runes in balanced form.

The presence of two conventional runes, as well as the lexicality of both the Roskilde plate and Solberga plate 1 with its unconventional **p**-runes, caution us against assuming that this runic plate is not lexical: it might be at least partly so.

5.1.6 Klinta plates 1 and 2 (Öl BN83 and Öl BN84 respectively), Öland

Two copper plates were found in 1957 in an archaeological excavation of a cairn with a ship cremation in Klinta near Köpingsvik (RAÄ-no Köping 59:3). The grave containing these plates (no 59:3) also had burnt human bones, most of which belonged to a woman. The many grave goods were rich and interesting, and allow us to identify the grave as female and date it to c. 900–950 (Schulze 1987:60). Descriptions of the objects are provided by Hella Schulze (pp. 58–60, 106–113) and Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson (2015: 142–147).

The first plate is 22 mm long, 8–9 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick (Figure 34). The second is 44–45 mm long, 9–10 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. Both plates belong to type A. Plate 1 has a hole, although the shorter side with the hole is rolled up, forming a loop. The same occurs with one of the sides of plate 2 (Figure 35). The plates are stored in SHM with inventory number 25840:59:3.



Figure 34. Klinta plate 1. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

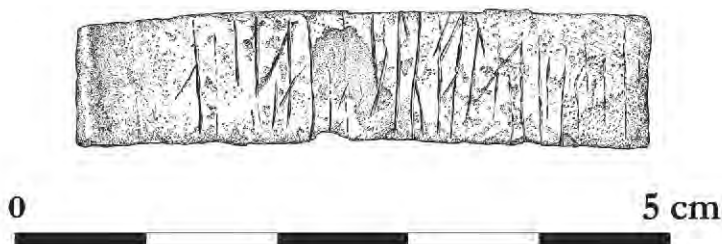


Figure 35. Klinta plate 2. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

The two plates have been examined by Bruce E. Nilsson (1973 nos 83–84) and Helmer Gustavson (2004:66 f.). Plate 1 has an inscription only on the obverse, which Nilsson (1973:242) transliterates as **irþn**. Jan Owe transliterates the obverse in SRD as **--run** on the basis of Gustavson's description (2004: 67). I examined the plate twice, in December of 2010 and in October of 2014. My transliteration of plate 1 is as follows (see the comments in the catalogue, no 38):

A: **-rūn** × ...

I discern only one possible mainstave before **rūn**; I further distinguish one possible, but very small, cross-shaped punctuation mark; the three dots indicate that the short right side of the plate is broken off. The runic sequence could be interpreted as runSw. *rūn* f. 'secret, secret knowledge' or 'rune'.

Plate 2 has been read only by Nilsson (1973:242), who transliterates:

A: **a---f--aplufalu---þr**

B: ---

My transliteration is as follows (all commentary and pictures are found in the catalogue, no 39):

A: **aīstrāubalufalaraj...**
 1 5 10 15

B: ...

I suggest no interpretation of this plate but believe that it is probably lexical. Although the reverse also contained an inscription, I can discern only faint traces of carved lines there, and I therefore transliterate this side with three dots. According to my new reading, the A-side has several short-twig runes: **ɑ** (r. 1), **s** (r. 3), **t** (r. 4 and possibly 6), possibly **b** or **o** (r. 8) and **ʀ** (rr. 5 and 16).

5.1.7 Solberga plates 3 (Öl ATA6371/83), 4 (Öl ATA423-2541-1996) and 5 (no signature), Öland

In addition to the two interpreted Solberga plates (see section 3.4), a further three plates derive from Köpingsvik itself. Two of these (3 and 4) were found during archaeological excavations in Solberga 4:8 (1983 and 1990 respectively), while the third (5) was found in Solberga 4:11 in earlier excavations in 1972. Some information about the circumstances of discovery can be found in Gustavson (2004:67–68); here it can briefly be stated that they all come from residential areas (urban centres). The plates are dated to a non-specific period in the Viking Age. In 2009 they were in the keeping of Kalmar County Museum, where I was able to examine them; I have however not been able to locate them since that time and therefore do not know their current inventory number (the find numbers can be found in Appendix 1). I offer no transliteration of these plates either here or in the catalogue.

Solberga plate 3 was found by the old guesthouse in Köpingsvik. It is 44 mm long, 26 mm wide and 1 mm thick and carved on both sides with unconventional runes (Figure 36). When I examined the plate in May 2009, I had access

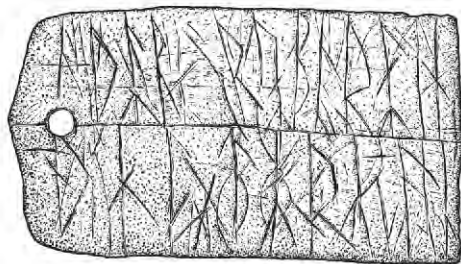
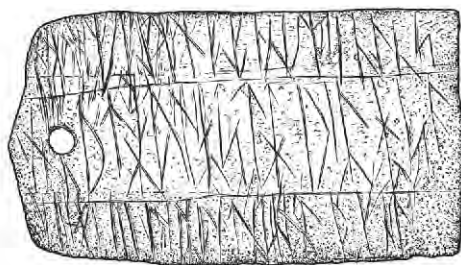


Figure 36. Solberga plate 3. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

0

5 cm

to a stereomicroscope with very good magnification and lighting thanks to Max Jahrehorn, who was working as the first curator of Kalmar County Museum at that time. It was also thanks to his suggestion to immerse the plate in alcohol in order to see its carving lines more clearly that I was able to make a minor discovery. A number of lines which had not earlier been visible suddenly appeared underneath the clearly carved lines; these were much thinner and fainter. My preliminary conclusion was that there was an earlier inscription under the current one; it had been erased, but not without leaving some traces. It is however impossible to say how this inscription might have looked and which signs it comprised.

Solberga plate 4 (Figure 37) is 26–27 mm long, 10–11 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. It was found in trench 1 in phase 2, which is the area where a smelting oven along with a number of other items were discovered in 1970. The grave of a Vendel girl was also found there in 1990 (Gustavson 2004:66). The plate is of type A and has a metal wire in its hole. There are rune-like markings on both sides; these are however barely visible on the obverse as the plate is heavily corroded.

Solberga plate 5 (Figure 38) is 39–45 mm long, 11–14 mm wide and 1 mm thick. Gustavson (2004:67) records the plate as 9 mm long but this must be an error. The object was found in 1972 in complex 460 in trench 24, Solberga 4:11, Lägerhyddan. It also belongs to type A and has a metal wire through its hole. There are clear carving lines on both sides which seem to be both ornamental and rune-like.

As regards typology and size, the plates most resemble the early plates in the corpus (such as the Björkö plates and the Ladoga plate) and they can therefore be confidently dated to the Viking period. I do not venture to date them any more specifically since they were found in an area with Vendel, Viking and mediaeval finds.

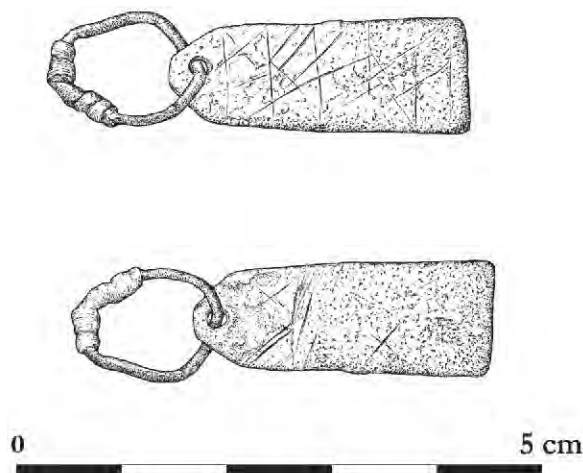
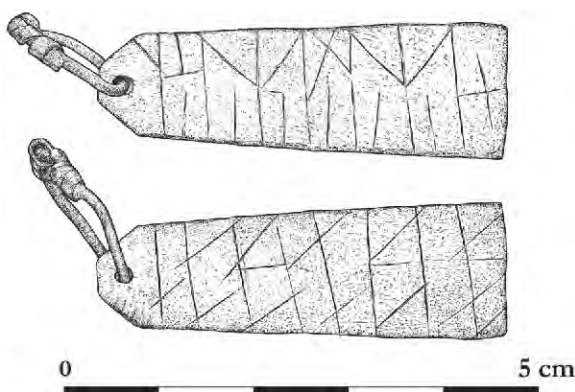


Figure 37. Solberga plate 4. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Figure 38. Solberga plate 5. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.



5.2 Uninterpreted B-type plates and fragmentary runic plates

5.2.1 Old Uppsala plate 2 (no signature), Uppland

A copper plate was discovered during archaeological excavations in Old Uppsala in 2012. It was found in a disturbed soil layer with both Viking and mediaeval finds. Magnus Källström dates the plate to the Viking Age or (less probably) the early Middle Ages.

The plate is intact and can therefore be classified as type B. It is somewhat deformed (slightly bent) and there is a crack in one of the short sides (Figure 39), but the corners are rounded, which means that the classification is certain. The length of the plate (when straightened out) is 61 mm, the width is 24–26 mm and the thickness 1 mm. It is currently located in Uppsala with the consultant organisation ‘The Archaeologists’ (*Arkeologerna*, SHM, find no: 2055; context: 35 8398 find unit: 35 9227).

Magnus Källström examined the plate with a stereomicroscope on three occasions, the last time after the plate had been cleaned (January, 2015). His transliteration is given below, while his report is found in Källström 2017b:

A: **-ho--hou**

B: **-ohb-hob**

I examined the plate once (in March, 2017) and my reading is:

A: **-hoþ-hou**

B: **-ohþ-hoþ**

Runes 1, 5, 9 and 13 all have the same form (𐀓) and can be read as the balanced runes **m** or **r**. Rune 4 can be read as an uncertain balanced rune, **b**. The same balanced **b**-rune forms are found on Solberga plate 1.

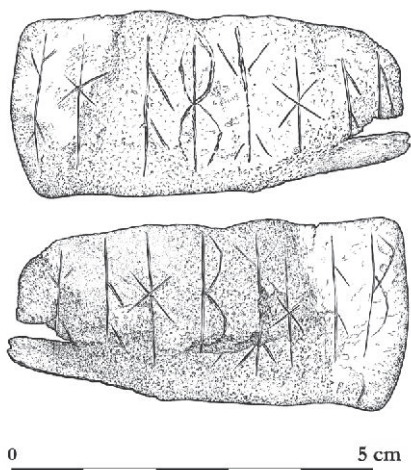


Figure 39. Old Uppsala plate 2. © Sofia Pereswett-off-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

We thus have a runic sequence **-hob** which is encountered twice, once on each side (rr. 1–4 and 13–16). We have a further two runic sequences: one of these has the same runes as the first, but the **h**-rune and the **o**-rune have changed places, resulting in **ohb**. The third runic sequence is also reminiscent of the first but has **u** instead of **b**: **hoy**. It is unclear whether the inscription is lexical: everything depends on how the rune **h** is identified. Källström regards a reading of **h** as less probable than **m**, since the rune initiates the sequences on both sides. It is not however inconceivable that **h** here represents a vowel sound, which could begin a word. Interpretable sequences can be identified in the inscription: **hob**, for example, could be interpreted as the OIcel. noun *hop* n. ‘hope’ (*Norrøn ordbok*).

5.2.2 Sigtuna plate 3 (U AST1;171), Uppland

This plate was found in 1927 together with Sigtuna plate 2 (see section 4.8) in disturbed cultural layers of the ‘Humlegården’ block in Sigtuna, in trenches 7 and 8 at a depth of c. half a metre (Gihl 1927b:6). The findplace of the plates can be characterised as an urban centre. Sigtuna plate 3 is 42 mm long, 23 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. It is currently stored at Sigtuna Museum with the inventory number SF 1305:1.

Arthur Nordén (1943) first recorded that the plate was made of copper (p. 154) but later that it was bronze (p. 170). I have therefore described the material as unspecified copper alloy. The plate is fragmentary (Figure 40), and along its lower edge is a squarish opening which looks like the remains of a hole. I examined the plate twice, in October and November of 2015, and am of the opinion that the edges of the opening do not indicate a deliberate incision: they are uneven and can hardly have been made on purpose. The plate is therefore regarded with fragmentary plates (rather than with type A).

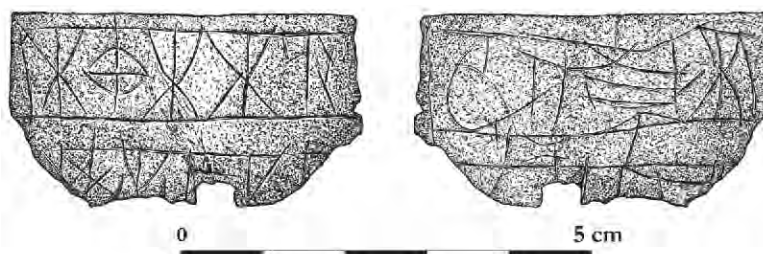


Figure 40. Sigtuna plate 3. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

The plate has been investigated by Nordén (1943:170 f.) and Gustavson (2013, SI 4), but for understandable reasons neither of these scholars provides a transliteration. Lines of carving run across the front and back side. The preserved writing surfaces are divided into rows, and these are separated from each other and from the edges by extra framing lines. We see a similar way of delimiting the rows on the Sunnerby plate. The obverse contains several unconventional signs, of which some might be runes, e.g. **m** or **r**-runes in balanced form. The reverse contains a sign which could also be a balanced form of runic **m** or **r**. The rest of the surface is filled with lines which despite their chaotic nature appear to be deliberately carved. A cautious suggestion is that this might represent a picture of some kind. I do not however venture to suggest what the carver in this case intended it to represent.

5.2.3 Sigtuna plate 4 (U Fv1986;220B), Uppland

The plate was discovered in 1985 in the ‘Granhäcken’ block during archaeological excavations of the early mediaeval cultural layer in Sigtuna (RAÄ-no Sigtuna 6:2). The findplace for the plate is urban central. The plate is 45 mm long, 16–20 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. It is kept at Sigtuna Museum and its find number is SF:182. Both short sides of the plate are broken off, and it is therefore considered with the group of fragmentary plates (Figure 41).

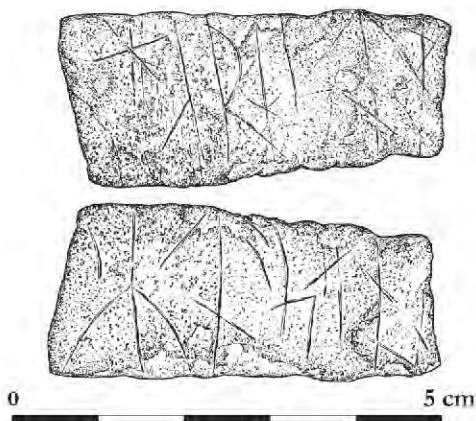


Figure 41. Sigtuna plate 4. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

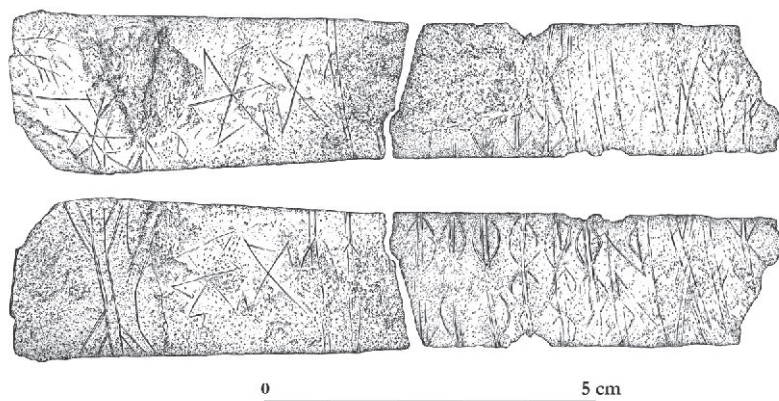


Figure 42. Sigtuna plate 5 (side B above and side A below). © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

(2016:16 f.). I have examined the plate twice (in October and November of 2015) and discuss the inscription in the catalogue (no 28). Here I will simply describe how the runic signs on the plate might have looked had the metal been less weathered and damaged in several places. I am thus combining the inscriptions on sides A and B in order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the plate's runes (Figure 43). I ignore the carved lines at the beginning of side B in the clean sketch. These are discussed below and presented in Figure 44.

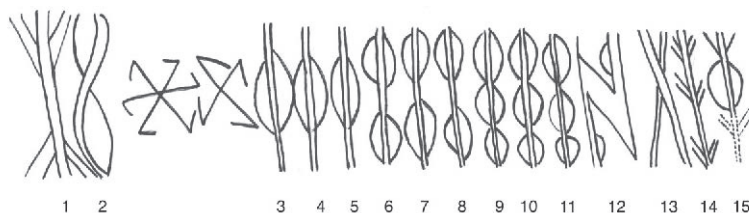


Figure 43. Sigtuna plate 5: clean sketch of the runic signs.

As we can see, the preserved inscription comprises fifteen signs which may be described as unconventional runes; they do not all, however, merit the description “rune-like”³⁶⁵ (Gustavson & Källström 2016:17 f.). Those signs which might be described thus are nos 2 and 12. I will argue below that there are counterparts to these runes in Viking-Age runic inscriptions. There are also two cross-shaped signs. I call the first of these *solhjul* (‘sun wheel’) and the second *hakkors* (‘hooked cross’ or ‘swastika’).

All of the runes have doubled mainstaves; runes 1 and 14 also have doubled branches. Rune 1 resembles the balanced form of **m** or **r**. Similar signs occur on the Ladoga plate, the Gorodišče plates, the Hovgård plate, Sigtuna plate 3 and the Roskilde plate. Rune 2 is shaped like a number 8, and one of its lines is

³⁶⁵ “runliknande”

also doubled. It resembles the *i*-runes on the Rök stone (in the part of the inscription encrypted with older runes, see Figure 5), Gorodišče plate 1 (Figure 63) and Gällungs plate 1 (Figure 50). The difference is that the rune lacks a mainstave, unless its doubled line is acting as such. All of the other runes in this inscription have doubled mainstaves, so although the line is shaped as a reversed *s*, its doubled character might indicate that it is a mainstave.

The sun wheel consists of three straight lines which cross in the middle and have hooked ends facing counter-clockwise. A sun wheel of the same type is attested on a plate from Källa Old Church, Öland (see Figure 46 below) although the hooked arms face in the opposite direction. The swastika consists of two lines with hooked arms pointing in a clockwise direction. On the appearance of the swastika in Scandinavian magic (and especially in other runic inscriptions), see Linderholm (1918:83 f.).

Runes 3–5 have an identical shape: they consist of two mainstaves and two bows on either side of the middle section of the mainstave. Runes 6–8 have a similar appearance with a greater number of bows: they consist of two mainstaves and four bows. A corresponding sign is found on Sigtuna plate 6. Runes 9–11 also have doubled mainstaves but six bows instead of four. The number of bows thus increases successively from two to six every fourth sign. Similarly symmetrical elements with increasing numbers of bows are found on the plates from Sunnerby and Roskilde. I cannot quite agree with Gustavson and Källström (2016:18) about rune 12; they believe that the sign in question was earlier unknown in runic contexts. The rune can easily be identified as a long-branch *s*-rune with doubled lines and two bows which, like the previous eleven runes, recalls the *p*-rune. Similar *s*-runes with *p*-bows occur on Sigtuna plate 7 (r. 4) and the Hovgård plate (r. 25). Rune 13 resembles an older *a*-rune, and a corresponding sign is found on Gorodišče plate 1. Rune 14 has a doubled mainstave and six doubled branches pointing upwards, three on the right and three on the left side of the mainstave. Rune 15 consists of two mainstaves, two bows and at least two branches pointing upwards. Since the right end of the plate has broken off, it is impossible to confirm how many signs the inscription would have had when intact. I suspect however that the plate could hardly have been much longer, and speculate that no more than one or two signs have been lost. We now return to the carved lines at the beginning of the B-side: Gustavson & Källström (2016:18) note that there are “carvings which are difficult to interpret”³⁶⁶ at the beginning but do not comment on these. They are however of great interest.

The upper sign is difficult to discern but it can be confirmed that it has symmetrical elements which allude to the number 3. The lower sign, which be distinguished fairly easily, is at first sight reminiscent of a snowflake. They are both depicted in Figure 44, where the dotted lines denote reconstructed lines of carving. One quickly realises that the signs resemble symbols from Scandina-

³⁶⁶ “svårtolkade ristningar”

vian books of black magic. In an Icelandic book of black magic from the sixteenth century (Lindqvist 1921), we find a series of signs, which I reproduce with a note on the spell from which the relevant sign derives (Figure 45). The signs on the runic plate particularly resemble those called *ægishjálmr* ‘the helmet of terror’, which is “one of the most common magic signs in Icelandic magic”³⁶⁷ (Lindqvist 1921:46, fn. 4).

The uppermost sign on the plate is undeniably too damaged to allow us to be quite sure of its identity; I would however unhesitatingly describe the lower as a kind of terror-helmet. Such magic signs were a feature of many spells, e.g. “to win the love of a girl” (Lindqvist 1921:29).³⁶⁸ They were supposed to be made on the right palm “with saliva on a fasting stomach”.³⁶⁹ The helmets of terror also occur in, for example, a spell against disease in livestock, in which they were supposed to “[be] shorn or cut into livestock if it is attacked by dizziness or disease”.³⁷⁰ Lindqvist (p. 29, fn. 4) notes that the use of terror-helmets and signs of the cross “for similar purposes is attested in Uppland”.³⁷¹

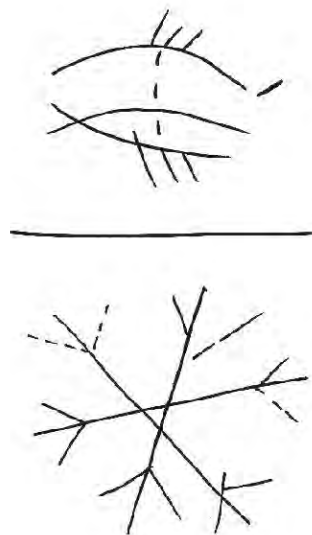


Figure 44. Sigtuna plate 5: Clean sketch of the symbols on side B.

Lindqvist draws attention to the fact (p. 46, fn. 4) that the sign of the cross or crucifix is used for the same purpose as the terror-helmet in certain magic formulas, and observes that such use of the crucifix could be secondary in relation to the helmets. It is nevertheless his opinion (ibid.) that “much suggests that the situation is the reverse and that the use of the magic staves in question in Icelandic magic is a direct reflection of a Christian rite.”³⁷²

³⁶⁷ “ett av den isländska magiens vanligaste trolldomstecken”

³⁶⁸ “att vinna en flickas kärlek”

³⁶⁹ “med saliv på fastande mage”

³⁷⁰ “klippa[s] eller skära[s] in på ett kreatur, om det får svindelanfall eller pest”

³⁷¹ “för liknande ändamål är belagt i Uppland”

³⁷² “åtskilligt talar för att förhållandet är omvänt och att bruket av nämnda trollstav i isländsk magi är en direkt återspeglning av en kristen rit.”

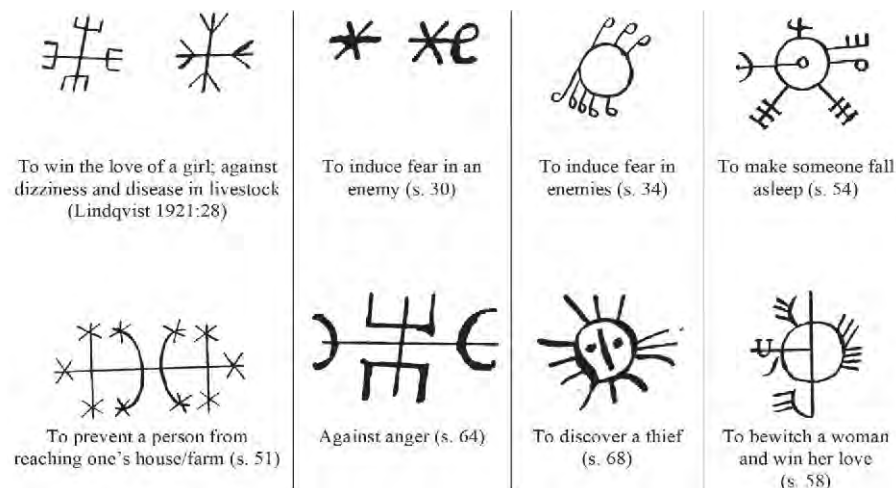


Figure 45. Symbols from an Icelandic book of black magic from the sixteenth century (Lindqvist 1921).

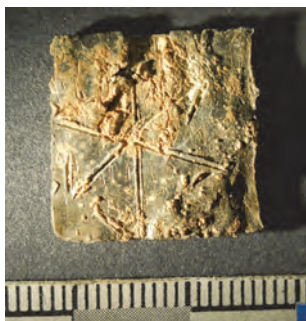


Figure 46. The plate from Källa Old Church, Öland.

The runic plate is completely lacking in archaeological context and is therefore undated; it is however unlikely to be younger than the thirteenth century. The material (not lead but copper alloy) unfortunately provides few clues in an Upplandic context since there are two mediaeval copper plates from Uppland, and since copper seems to have been in use for longer in the Middle Ages in Uppland than in other places (Källström, pers. comm.). The runic signs on the plate resemble the shapes found on several Viking-Age runic plates, for which reason I include it in the corpus and suggest a broad dating of 1000–1199. It is in any case conceivable that we have here one of the earliest examples of the sign known as the helmet of terror (*skräckhjälmen*) and that Lindqvist's assumed relationship between this sign and the crucifix should be called into question. Beyond observing the interchangeability of these two signs in a number of magic formulas, Lindqvist (1921:46 f., fn. 4) also argues strongly that the *ægishjálmr* resembles "a Greek cross, the only difference being that the ends of the cross arms have been extended into man-runes, a pagan element,

which was intended to enhance the power of the sign”.³⁷³ One may question here whether this development would actually have proceeded in this way. The six-armed sign on the runic plate could instead be a prototype of the terror-helmet which later, influenced by the Christian symbol of the cross, came to have only four arms embellished with *maðr*- or *ýr*-branches.

The inscription on Sigtuna plate 5 could then be regarded as one of the rare (if otherwise attested) types of *secret formula* found on Viking-Age runic plates.

5.2.5 Sigtuna plate 6 (no signature), Uppland

The circumstances of this plate’s discovery are unclear. Like the previous one, this plate was also discovered in the store of Sigtuna Museum in 2014 by the archaeologist Anders Söderberg. Its inventory number is SF:1375,7, which includes a further 72 objects belonging in their turn to different catalogue items. The catalogue entry for the plate has the note: “Dig 1927? Designation: ‘large trench. Monday’ (August)”.³⁷⁴ The year 1927 immediately brings to mind Gunnar Gihl’s dig in the ‘Humlegården’ block, which unearthed Sigtuna plates 2 and 3. Helmer Gustavson and Magnus Källström (2016:15) have investigated this possibility and provide the following report:

This is not however supported by the information on the catalogue card. According to the report in ATA, the dig was in fact moved on July 25 from the ‘Humlegården’ block to “Fornhemmet tomt” (the Heritage Museum plot) i.e. into the ‘St. Gertrud’ block, where digging continued until “Monday the 8th August” (Gihl 1927a:5). If the year 1927 is correct, it is thus more likely that the finds labelled Sf 1375 come from this area. The trench here was evidently also quite large, 10 × 2 metres. It was further widened to 4 metres during the last week of digging, when Gihl was assisted by “Ph.D. student Erik Floderus”. According to his own account, Gihl “made an inventory and catalogued all the finds made during the period 12 July–8 Aug.” (Gihl 1927a:6) and if the Sf 1375 material derives from any of these digs, it must comprise objects which were overlooked when the list was drawn up. The ‘Humlegården’ and ‘St. Gertrud’ blocks were however not the only places being excavated in Sigtuna in 1927; rather there is also information about digging operations in the blocks of ‘Koppardosan’, ‘Urmakaren’ and ‘Ödåker’.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ “ett grekiskt kors, endast med den skillnaden, att korsarmarnas ändar äro utbildade till maðr-runor, ett hedniskt inslag, som var ägnat att ytterligare öka tecknets verkningskraft”

³⁷⁴ “Grävning 1927? Påskrift: ‘stora schaktet. måndagen’ (augusti).”

³⁷⁵ “Uppgifterna på katalogkortet talar dock emot detta. Enligt rapporten i ATA flyttades nämligen grävningarna den 25 juli från Humlegården till ”Fornhemmet tomt” dvs. kvarteret S:ta Gertrud, där man grävde fram till ”måndagen den 8 augusti” (Gihl 1927a:5). Om året 1927 stämmer är det alltså sannolikare att fynden under Sf 1375 kommer från detta område. Tydligt var schaktet här också ganska stort, 10 × 2 meter. Det breddades dessutom till 4 meter under den sista grävveckan, då Gihl biträdades av ”filosofie kandidaten Erik Floderus”. Gihl skall enligt egen utsago ha ”inventarieförtecknat och katalogiserat samtliga under tiden 12 juli–8 aug. gjorda fynd” (Gihl 1927a:6) och om materialet under Sf 1375 hör till någon av dessa grävningar måste det ha rört sig om föremål, som blivit förbisedda när förteckningen upprättades. Humlegården och S:ta Gertrud var dock inte de enda ställen där det grävdes i Sigtuna 1927 utan det finns även uppgifter om markgrepp i kvarteren Koppardosan, Urmakaren och Ödåker.”

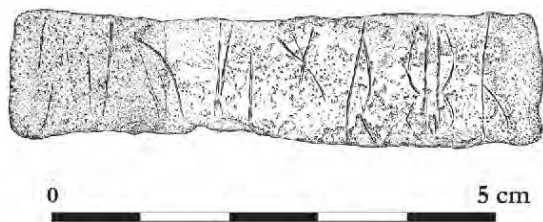


Figure 47. Sigtuna plate 6. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

I include the plate in the corpus since its inscription lacks any conclusively mediaeval features. Uncertainty about its date nevertheless remains. The plate seems to have retained its original shape and is therefore classified as type B (Figure 47). One of its short sides is bent. It is 60 mm long when straightened out, 12–14 mm wide and c. 0.9 mm thick. The inscription has been examined by Gustavson and Källström (p. 16), who suggest the reading **--u--hr-ø.**

I examined the plate twice (in October and November, 2015). Only the obverse has signs of writing, but I cannot determine whether the plate also had lines of carving on the reverse since the entire surface has been obliterated (see figure 29.1 in the catalogue). The identifiable runes on the obverse consist of conventional and unconventional runes, and my reading coincides with that of the authors named above. The unconventional runes (2, 4, 8) have doubled mainstaves. Similar methods of forming mainstaves occur on Sigtuna plate 5 and Solberga plate 1. One can also observe that the **u**-rune may have been reinforced with an interior branch. If this reading is correct, the rune could be compared with the **u**-runes in the encrypted part of the inscription on a tuning key from the ‘Professorn’ block in Sigtuna (U NOR2000;27A, see Gustavson 2000a and 2008:41).

5.2.6 Sigtuna plate 7 (no signature), Uppland

In the summer of 2014, a copper plate (Figure 48) was found at ‘Göte’s petrol station’,³⁷⁶ an old petrol station alongside the bus terminus in Sigtuna. The excavations were carried out by the company *Arkeologikonsult* and Stockholm County Museum led by Anna Hed-Jakobsson. Thirty-three graves with skeletons, dated from 1000 to 1050, were discovered in this place; directly over the graves were buildings and workshops for horn and bone crafts as well as for bronze casting (Hed-Jakobsson & Runer 2016:80). The latter are dated to the late eleventh century. The plate, which has been archaeologically dated from the mid-eleventh to the mid-twelfth century, was found in this layer and thus probably derives from a residential area connected with crafts. The plate was examined by Källström (in Gustavson & Källström 2016:19 f.), who describes the find circumstances as follows (p. 19):

³⁷⁶ “Götes mack”

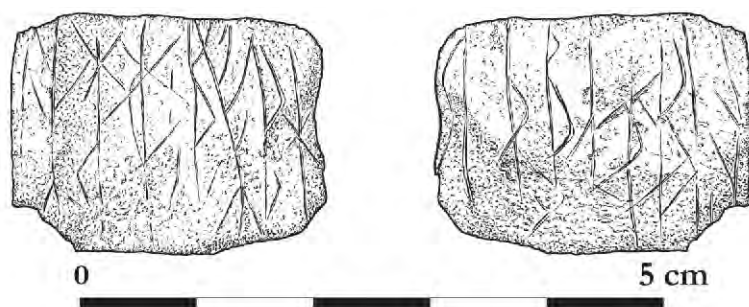


Figure 48. Sigtuna plate 7. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

The plate belonged to the settlement phase and was lying in a thin coal-bearing layer, which was above a heavily disturbed layer with many animal bones. These latter were resting on the level of ground from which the Viking graves had been dug. Other finds in the same layer as the runic plate included an iron belt-fitting, millstone fragments and ceramics of type AII and AIV, allowing a preliminary dating to the late eleventh or early twelfth century (message from Anna Hed-Jakobsson, *Arkeologikonsult*).³⁷⁷

I examined the plate twice: in September 2015 (before the inscription had been cleaned) and in March 2017 (after its conservation). The plate is 25 mm long and 22–23 mm wide. The width is c. 0.8 mm. There are lines of carving on both sides, and I prefer to identify the signs of the inscription as runiforms (rather than ‘pseudorunes’ as in Gustavson & Källström p. 19). A description of the runes is given in the catalogue (no 30). One may note that the inscription is not comprised exclusively of runiforms but also has two conventional runes, **þ** and *****. The closest parallel to the inscription as concerns both runes and dating is a runic bone from Lund (DR Fv1993;225), as has already been pointed out by Källström (in Gustavson & Källström, p. 20).

5.2.7 The Eketorp plate (Öl ATA326-1087-2007), Öland

A bronze plate was found in 1970 in Eketorp Fort. Its exact findplace is known (Square X 13), but the plate could have landed here in soil dug up from anywhere in Eketorp Fort, which was excavated in 1970. It is of course most probable that it belongs to the Eketorp III period (1000–1300s), but the possibility that it comes from Eketorp II (400–700s) cannot be excluded. The plate has been dated to an unspecified time in the Viking Age in SRD.

³⁷⁷ “Blecket tillhörde bebyggelsefasen och låg i ett tunt kolbemängt lager, vilket överlagrade ett tjockt omrört lager med mängder med djurben. Det senare vilade på den marknivå från vilken de vikingatida gravarna hade grävts. I samma lager som runblecket framkom bl.a. ett remändebeslag av järn, kvarnstensfragment och keramik av AII- och AIV- typ, vilket ger en preliminär datering till sent 1000- eller tidigt 1100-tal (meddelande från Anna Hed-Jakobsson, Arkeologikonsult).”

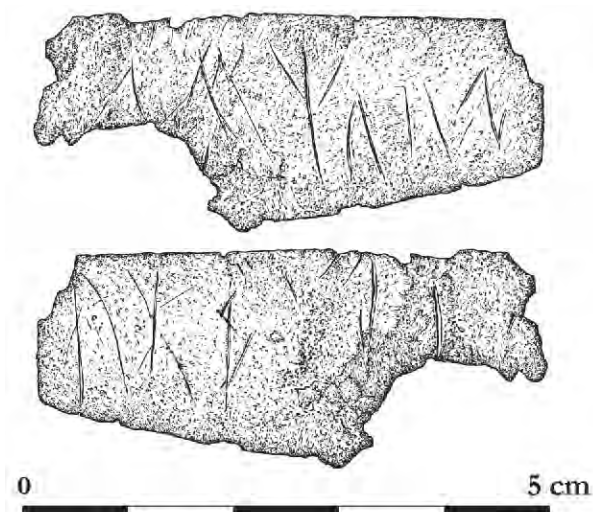


Figure 49. The Eketorp plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Both short sides of the object are damaged (Figure 49). A large piece of metal is missing from one short side and a small piece from the other. The plate is 40–49 mm long, 13–15 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. I judge it to be far too fragmentary to determine its type. It is kept in SHM under inventory number 31597.

The plate is covered in verdigris and the runes are difficult to see. The inscription, which runs over both sides, has been studied by Helmer Gustavson (2000b). He provides (p. 1 f.) the following transliteration:

A: -iiumi--

B: um-!--

I examined the plate on three occasions (May 2009, September 2010 and October 2014) and suggest the following transliteration (see commentary and pictures in the catalogue, no 37):

A: -iiumūuuu
1 5

B: au-----
7 10

The A-side is read from right to left, as is indicated by the shape of the **u**-runes, while the B-side is read from left to right. The A-side begins with an unusual sign, **!**. It is interesting to observe that on the Rök stone (Ög 136), coordinate runes are written with the signs **!** and **!**. Could this mean that the Eketorp plate also features coordinate runes? The following two **i**-runes support this idea but it is difficult to ascertain which number coordinates the runes on side A might

indicate. This side concludes with an unconventional bind-rune (rune 6), which consists of four overlapping **u**-runes. Such bind-runes with **u** occur on the B-side of the Roskilde plate. Visible on the B-side are a bind-rune, **au**, and two unconventional runes, which might be balanced runes (**ʝ** and **ʟ**).

It is difficult to provide a runographic dating of the object. Gustavson does not address this matter in his report (2000b). There are a number of balanced runes in Viking-Age runic inscriptions on plates, but they are also attested in runic inscriptions from the fifth century. The **ʝ**-runes of the Rök stone are from the ninth century while the bind-runes involving **u** on the Roskilde plate have been dated to 1050–1100. I therefore retain the non-specific dating to the Viking Age, (V), which is far more likely than either the mediaeval or proto-Norse period.

The plate could be encrypted but I have no suggestion for interpretation.

5.3 Uninterpreted C-type plates

5.3.1 Gällungs plates 1 and 2 (G 261), Gotland

Two bronze plates (Figures 50 and 51 respectively) were found during archaeological excavations in 1973 of a cemetery in Gällungs, Väskinde parish, Gotland (RAÄ-no Väskinde 65:1). No report on the excavations was ever written although it is known that around 20 graves in the west part of the cemetery were investigated in 1973. Twelve graves containing skeletons in round or rectangular stone settings (one of which was the grave of a horse rider) were found, as well as four certain cremation graves. All of these were from the Viking Age (see FMIS Väskinde 65:1). The plates come from one of the graves although it is unclear which. Both plates are rolled up. Roll 1 is 80 mm when straightened out, 14 mm wide and 10 mm in diameter. Roll 2 is 45 mm when extended, 21 mm wide and 9 mm in diameter. They are stored in SHM under inventory number 32391.

Thorgunn Snædal (*GR* 3, G 261) gives a reading of the rolls and suggests a runographic dating of the tenth century. Only one sign is visible on roll 1, which Snædal (*GR* 3, G 261) transliterates as a bind-rune: **þþar**.

There are several runic signs on roll 2, which in line with Snædal's description can be read as follows:³⁷⁸

A: **siṛþn ʞ tr--lpu--- ʞ na--ḡ-l ʞ ...atutu**

B: ...

I examined the rolls in November of 2015 and suggest the following transliteration (commentary is found in the catalogue, nos 13 and 14 respectively):

³⁷⁸ Snædal provides a transliteration of the first but not the second inscription.

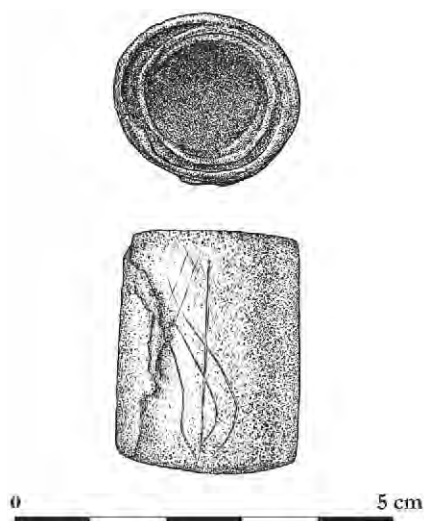


Figure 50. Gällungs plate 1. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

1.

A: $\widehat{r}i...$

B: ...

2.

A: **siṛṇi : ʀ ...ru--- ʀ naḥih!-- ʀ ...hiaṭuṇu**

B: ...

I also identify a bind-rune on roll 1 although I read it differently. On roll 2, I distinguish no **a** and **n**-runes with one-sided branches (as discerned by Snædal); nor do I find any other short-twig runes in the inscription.

It is difficult to determine whether the inscriptions were intended to be lexical. I do not believe that there is enough strong evidence to conclude that the

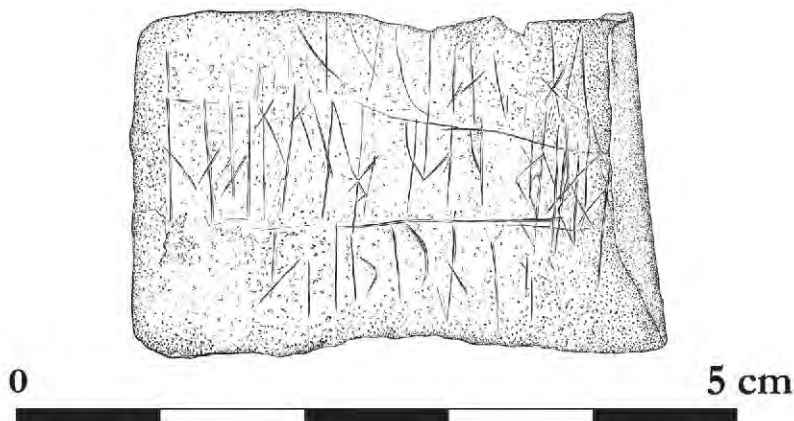


Figure 51. Gällungs plate 2. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

runes of the inscription are “pagan magical signs”³⁷⁹ devoid of linguistic meaning (as Snædal does). In the first place, there are no unconventional runes in the inscriptions, barring the bind-rune on roll 1; in the second place, the inscription on roll 2 gives a certain impression of being lexical from a phonotactical point of view.

5.3.2 The Hässelby plate (U FJÖLNIR1985:2;28), Uppland

In 1984, a bronze plate (Figure 52) was found during archaeological excavations in Hässelby, Börje parish. The investigations concerned a settlement area from the late Vendel period which also contained a number of Viking graves which were dated to the eleventh century. The plate was found in a stone setting otherwise devoid of finds, the shape and proportions of which resembled other Viking graves in the area. Leif Karlenby (1985:44 f.) suggests that it might be the grave of an infant. This could explain the lack of bone remains, since the bones of children tend to decompose quickly. Karlenby notes at the same time, however, that it remains difficult to account for the lack of nails and coffin remains such as were found in the other graves. Nor did the adult graves have a stone setting as well-made as this empty ‘grave’. One is tempted to suggest that it might represent a kind of symbolic burial (see Appelgren & Nilsson 2007 on symbolic burials and graves without bone remnants). The plate is currently in the keeping of the County Museum of Uppland (‘Upplandsmuseet’). For the find number see Appendix 1.

The plate is fragmentary and consists of two pieces. One piece is c. 20 mm long and 15 mm wide. The second is c. 8 mm long and 12 wide; both are 0.5 mm thick. Karlenby (1985:46 f.) suggests that the plate had a case made of leather and wood, and he describes wood and leather residue found respectively below and above the plate. I cannot comment on the likelihood of a case, but when I examined the plate in December of 2015 I could see remnants of wood

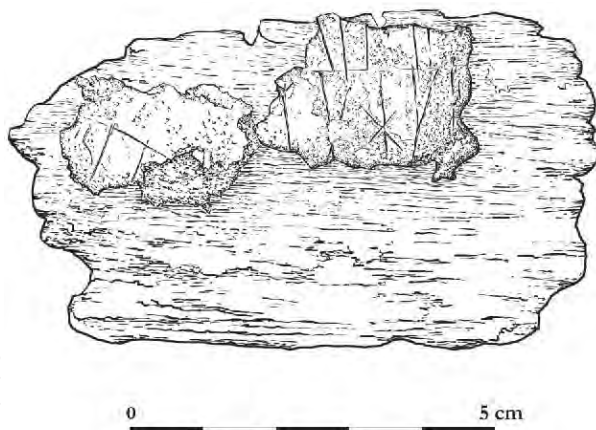


Figure 52. The Hässelby plate.
© Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath:
Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina,
based on examinations, sketches
and photographs by the author.

³⁷⁹ “hednamagiska tecken”

and possibly also of leather in the box containing the fragmentary plate. Karlenby also suggests that the plate constitutes a folded pendant. I did not dare to move the fragment to study the reverse and therefore cannot comment on the likelihood of this.

The inscription covered two sides with two lines on each side, but only occasional runes can now be distinguished. Both my and Karlenby's transliterations can be found in the catalogue and are supplemented by drawings and photographs (no 22). Karlenby's reading has 15 runes, of which only 9 can be identified and four accounted certain. In my reading I identify four runes, of which I judge only one to be certain, namely the rune **h**.

The plate is too fragmentary to determine whether or not its inscription was lexical.

5.3.3 The Östra Aros plate (U Uppl1969;32 †), Uppland

A folded bronze plate emerged during archaeological excavations in 1966 in Uppsala, in the choir of St. Peter's thirteenth-century church ruin (RAÄ-no Uppsala 63:1). The plate was found in soil from the excavations and its exact position is therefore undetermined. We do know however that the soil came "from the lowest layer of skeletons among the graves there" (Svärdström 1969a:31).³⁸⁰ Elisabeth Svärdström dates the plate runographically to the period from the end of the eleventh century up to and including the twelfth century and observes (p. 37) that "under the southern choir wall [...] some east-west facing graves with skeletons were found in an undisturbed position, as well as remains of coffins, which must have belonged to a Christian burial place older than the thirteenth-century church. We are inclined to connect the runic plate and the choir's lower graves containing skeletons with this older burial complex."³⁸¹

The length of the plate is 36 mm (when straightened out), the width is 29 mm and the thickness is 0.5 mm. According to Svärdström, it had been added to the inventory (inventory no 13000:241) of the County Museum of Uppland ('Upplandsmuseet') but was being kept for conservation in the technical department of SHM during her examination. When I wrote to the County Museum of Uppland, their reply stated that this inventory number was not found in the museum (email from Kerstin Åberg, 4 December 2015). I have also been in contact with SHM about the plate but it has not been located there either (verbal message from Elisabet Regner, 9 February 2016).

Svärdström (1969a:31) observes that the inscription runs on the outer and inner sides, and she provides both a transliteration (p. 32) and a detailed description of the runes which can be discerned (pp. 32–34):

³⁸⁰ "från det understa skelettlagret bland gravarna där"

³⁸¹ "under södra kormuren [...] påträffades i orubbat läge några öst–västligt orienterade skeletthgravar, även kistrestre, som måste tillhöra en kristen begravningsplats äldre än 1200-talskyrkan. Med denna äldre begravningsanläggning vill man gärna förbinda runblecket och korets understa skeletthgravar."

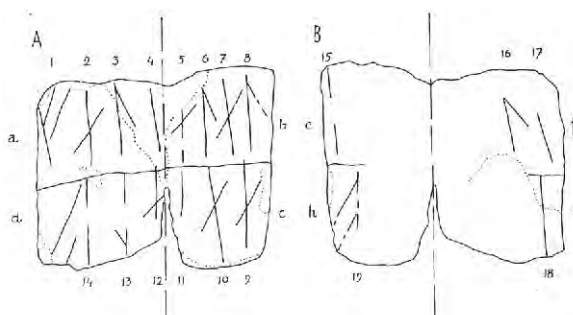


Figure 53. The Östra Aros plate, Elisabeth Svärdström's drawing (1969a:35).

A: **fa!-ala! ¶ ¶ aa-alf**

B: **-...l- ¶ -...f**

Fortunately, Svärdström investigated and photographed the plate using a stereomicroscope. She published (1969a:35) a number of these pictures in her article (see Figure 53). I located the original photographs at ATA and was able to confirm that her reading, as far as I can tell, is correct.

Svärdström (p. 37) notes that the runes are distinctly shaped and “have not in any respect become degenerate or distorted”.³⁸² At the same time she believes that the inscription can hardly be lexical, but rather belongs to (p. 35) “the same category of plates with letter magic as the Villberga plate, although with a smaller number of diverse signs in the runic sequences.”³⁸³ She further observes that she has not found “any direct parallels to the combination of **f**, **a** and **l**-runes on the Uppsala plate.”³⁸⁴ It is thus the repetition of runes which indicates that the plate might evidence letter magic. Svärdström also believes that many runic plates served in the practice of grave magic, and she therefore suggests that this is also such a case (p. 36): “Perhaps the purpose of the Uppsala plate too was to prevent the corpse’s return.”³⁸⁵

I do not question the possible association of this plate with grave magic, but I want to challenge Svärdström’s argument that the plate cannot be lexical. The Villberga plate, which is Svärdström’s best supporting evidence, may have contained a lexical inscription consisting of a rhyme. The inscription is thus not as obvious an example of letter magic as might previously have been thought. The Östra Aros plate is severely damaged and we cannot now determine whether or not it was lexical. I believe however that it lacks strong indications of letter magic. One might furthermore well imagine that this plate (like the Villberga plate) contained a kind of rhyme, which might therefore have resulted in the repetition of a certain number of runes.

³⁸² “inte i något avseende degenererade eller förvanskade”

³⁸³ “samma kategori av bokstavsmagiska bleck som Villbergablecket, ehuru med ett mindre antal olika tecken i runföljden”

³⁸⁴ “någon direkt motsvarighet till Uppsalableckets runkombination av **f**-, **a**- och **l**-runor”

³⁸⁵ “Kanske har man också med Uppsalablecket syftat till att förhindra den dödes genfärd.”

5.3.4 Summary

This investigation of all 22 presumably Viking-Age uninterpreted runic plates from Sweden shows that not all of these are definitely non-lexical. I have found no reason to question the non-lexicity of eight inscriptions (Björkö plate 2, Solberga plates 3, 4 and 5, Sigtuna 3, 5, 6 and 7). The number of uninterpreted plates which might be lexical is thus in my opinion 14. I have also challenged the idea that the plates from Villberga and Östra Aros evidence letter magic. I further propose an interpretation of the Villberga plate which, although far from unproblematic, seems more reasonable than the attribution of ideas of letter magic to the carver.

The conventional and unconventional runic shapes on the plates are described in section 8.1. It can nonetheless be briefly noted here that ten plates comprise exclusively conventional runes. A combination of conventional and unconventional runes occurs on six plates (the Hovgård plate, the Sunnerby plate, Old Uppsala plate 2, Sigtuna plates 6 and 7, and the Eketorp plate). Four plates are comprised entirely of unconventional runes (Gällungs plate 1, Solberga plate 3 and Sigtuna plates 3 and 5). On two plates (Solberga plates 4 and 5), only rune-like markings can be distinguished.

There are eight uninterpreted runic plates whose inscriptions may contain balanced runes (the Sunnerby plate, Old Uppsala plate 2, the Eketorp plate, Sigtuna plates 3, 5 and 6, Solberga plate 3 and the Hovgård plate).

6 Danish runic plates

pasi : run-... .. ¶ ki: lifa :
Pæssi rûn[ar] ... [læn]gi lifa
‘These runes ... live for a long time’
DR 119

This chapter first considers interpreted runic inscriptions, which are divided into province and type (two of type A and two fragmentary). The uninterpreted inscriptions are then considered and are similarly divided (one of type A, two of type B and one fragmentary). Common to these eight plates is not only geographical affiliation but also a late dating from the eleventh to twelfth centuries (the only exception being Lund plate 2, dated 950–1000).

6.1 Interpreted Danish A-type plates

6.1.1 The Østermarie plate (DR AUD1999;288), Bornholm

The silver plate from Englyst, Østermarie parish, Bornholm, is a metal detector find lacking a precise context of discovery. The plate was however found in a Viking-Age and early mediaeval settlement area (Østersøpladsen) and has been dated by Marie Stoklund (2003:867) on the basis of the runic shapes and the general archaeological context to the eleventh century (probably the second half).

The plate is 22 mm long, 20 mm wide and 1 mm thick. One of its sides has been broken off but the other has a round hole, 5 mm in diameter, which enables us to classify the object as belonging to type A (Figure 54). It is owned by the National Museum of Denmark but stored at Bornholm Museum (inventory no D 10/2000). The inscription runs over two sides and contains long-branch runes. It has been treated in detail by three runic scholars: Marie Stoklund (1999:299–305; 2003:866 f.), Rikke Steenholt Olesen (2007:86–94) and Magnus Källström (2007a:168, 341), and I will therefore discuss the inscription only briefly.

The inscription is not complete but the preserved part is clearly carved. Some of the runes in the break are however damaged and therefore difficult to identify. Most problematic, however, is the reading order of the inscription. Marie Stoklund (2003:866 f.) transliterates and translates the plate as follows:

A: **sigmoþr i... þir sī... -arnsmo**

B: **sua ristar... runar auk... ..ar heili... aki reist þi-rk**

Sigmod ... for you (?) **sī... -arns mo**. Thus carve ... runes and ... **ar heili/heil i ...**
heili/heil i ... Åge carved help.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁶ “Sigmod ... for dig (?) **sī... -arns mo**. Således rister ... runer og ... **ar heili/heil i ...**
Åge ristede hjælp.”

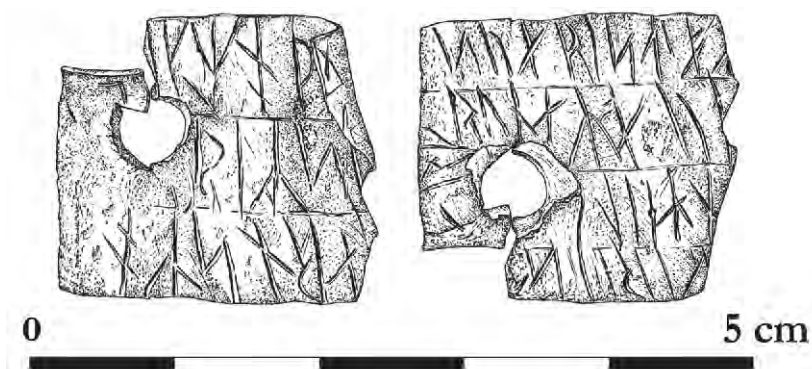


Figure 54. The Østermarie plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Rikke Steenholt Olesen's (2007:90, 94) transliteration, normalisation into Old Danish and interpretation are as follows:

A: **sigmoþri... ʀ ...-arnsmo ʀ þirsi...**

B: **suaristar... ʀ ...akireist bi ʀ -rk ʀ runarauk... ʀ ...arheili**

Sighmoth ... móthir(?) ... Swá ristær ... Aki ræist biarghrúnar ok ... (rún)ar hél í.

Sigmod ... mother(?) Thus carve(?) ... Åge(?) carved runes of help and ... into the amulet.³⁸⁷

Steenholt Olesen further proposes, with some reservation, that **-arns moþir** could be interpreted as *barns móthir* 'child's mother', and that **...ar** preceding the word **heil** could be a further compound with *(-rún)ar* which forms a pair with the preceding compound in a way similar to the *lyfrúnar* and *bōtrúnar* of the Skänninge plate. The final runic sequence **heilj** is interpreted by Steenholt Olesen as the noun *hél* (OWN *heill*) n. or f. 'amulet' and the prep. *í*; she thus arrives at the interpretation "into the amulet".³⁸⁸ She also discusses alternative interpretations, suggesting for example that the following OWS words might underlie the runic sequence: adj. *heill* 'complete, healthy, happy', noun *heili* f. 'health', v. *heilla* 'destroy, enchant' or v. *heila* 'make whole, cure'. Her preferred suggestion is however the feminine form of *hél* f., which is declined as an *i*-stem and in acc. sg. becomes *hél* (the expected case for the expression 'into the amulet').

Magnus Källström (2007a:168, 341) follows the same reading order as Steenholt Olesen and interprets side B in the same way with the exception of the form of the final word, which he tentatively proposes should be understood as *heilli* f. 'luck': "Åke(?) carved runes of protection and ... (run)es for luck(?)." ³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ "Sigmod ... mor(?) Således rister(?) ... Åge(?) ristede bjærgeruner og ... ind i amuletten"

³⁸⁸ "ind i amuletten"

³⁸⁹ Källström has informed me that he had in mind the dative form *heilli*, which is used, for example, in the phrase *illu heilli* 'for bad luck' (oral message). I have therefore modified his translation.

I examined the plate in August of 2017 and my transliteration differs from the previous ones as regards one rune. I read the runic sequence **bi 𐀚 -rkrunar** as **bi 𐀚 arkrunar** (see my comments in the catalogue, no 4).

I consider Steenholt Olesen's interpretation the most compelling. It is, moreover, as complete as it could under these circumstances reasonably be. The interpretation incorporates all of the lines and runic sequences which remain unexplained by Stoklund. Steenholt Olesen's reading is certainly reminiscent of the Skänninge plate as well as the Solberga plates (1 and 2), partly with its presumed compound expression 'runes of help' **biarkrunar**, partly with the cautiously proposed *barns móthir* 'child's mother', all of which might suggest that this plate, like the one from Solberga, was carved to aid a woman in labour. I am however uncertain whether there is enough space in the runic sequence **-arns mōþir** for the supplemented **b**-rune (see the comments in the catalogue, no 4). A further problematic element is the postposition of the preposition *í* after the word *hél*. Källström's interpretation 'for luck' here appears more likely.

The inscription probably contains two personal names, *Sigmōðr* and *Áki*(?). Stoklund (1999:288) initially indicates no gender for the first name, but later (2000:6) she identifies it as an otherwise unknown nominative masculine name consisting of two familiar anthroponymic elements, *Sigh*- and *-moth*. Källström does not comment on the name while Steenholt Olesen (2007:90) cautiously observes that the final element *-moth* also occurs in the feminine name *Asmoth*, although as the name on the plate has an ending in **r**, it ought to be a masculine name (cf. *NRL* p. 164). The second name in the runic sequence ...**aki** might be the masculine name *Áke*, but it is not possible to determine whether it is preserved in its entirety; it could also be a different *an*-stem masculine name (Källström 2007a:341).

6.1.2 The Roskilde plate (DR 246), Zealand

The bronze plate from the city of Roskilde was found in 1866 by a worker on a field located between Maglekilde and Roskilde Cathedral. No more precise find context is known. The object is 90 mm long, 10–13 mm wide and 2 mm thick. Its short right side is narrow and rounded while the short left side is wider and has rectangular corners (Figure 55); there is also a hole on this side with a metal wire through, which Erik Moltke (1939:124) identifies as being made of copper. The plate is kept at the National Museum of Denmark with inventory number D 29.

The inscription runs over two sides and the runes cover the entire surface of the plate. The runes are easy to discern and there is no trace of corrosion of the metal, although there are a few weathered areas at the lower edge of one of the sides. The runes are thus very clear and, were it not for some unusual shapes, would be generally easy to identify. Some resemble bind-runes, some balanced runes, while others give the impression of being decorative. The inscription must however be lexical since it contains the noun *lyf* n. 'remedy' and the OWS

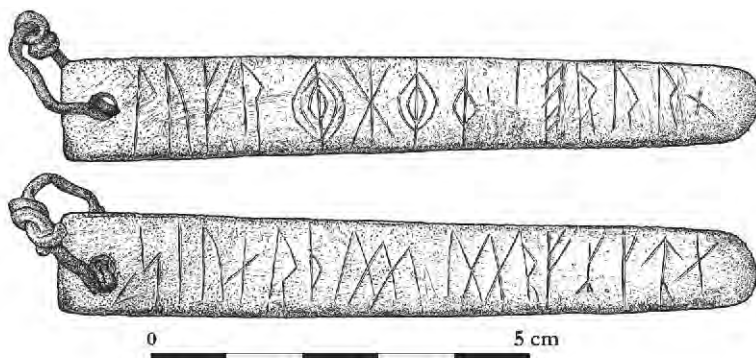


Figure 55. The Roskilde plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

masculine name *Sigvarðr*. I therefore assume that all the runes on the plate are interpretable.

This find was the first of its kind; metal plates with runic inscriptions were previously unknown. It is therefore unsurprising that the plate was discussed by many scholars. Only a few can be mentioned here: George Stephens (1867–1868:864) was the first to suggest that the inscription contained two masculine names: **siuarp** and **ōlufr**. Erik Moltke (1939:123–125; 1985:488 f.) discussed the runes of the inscription without suggesting an interpretation. Ivar Lindquist (1932:66 f., fn. 1) proposed both a reading and interpretation of the entire inscription; his interpretation was not accepted by *DRI* (1:297) although parts of his reading were. The plate continues to attract interest today and the most recent discussion is found in Steenholt Olesen (2007:94–98). Although she proposes neither reading nor interpretation, she alters the dating of the plate from the Middle Ages to the Late Viking Age, dating it on linguistic grounds to around 1050–1100 (p. 96 f.):

One side of the Roskilde bronze amulet, called side A, begins with an easily-read sequence with genuine runic forms: **siuarp**. [- - -] The sequence has been interpreted as the masculine O[ld] Da[nish] *Sighwarth*. [- - -] The form on the Roskilde bronze amulet does not show a nominative marker, which indicates that the amulet is from no earlier than the second half of the eleventh century, since the forms of masculine *a*-, *u*- and *i*-stems have nominative endings in Viking-Age inscriptions and on the Bornholm runestones.³⁹⁰

While I do not wish to question the dating itself, I will simply point out that the explanation is unsatisfactory; we cannot be certain that the name is in the nominative as it could equally well be in the accusative and comprise a continuation of the inscription on the reverse.

³⁹⁰ “Roskilde-bronzeamulettens ene side, kaldet side A, begynder med en letlæselig sekvens med genuine runeformer: **siuarp**. [- - -] Sekvensen er tolket som mandnavnet glda. *Sighwarth*. [- - -] Formen på Roskilde-bronzeamuletten viser ikke nominativmarkør, hvad der peger på, at amulettens ikke er tidligere end fra anden halvdel af 1000-tallet, eftersom former af maskuline *a*-, *u*- og *i*-stammer i vikingetidsindskrifter og på de bornholmske runesten viser nominativendelse.”

Lindquist's (1932:67) transliteration, normalisation into Old Danish, and translation are as follows:

A: **luf****ᵿ****ĒĒ**nt · **i**ssss**rrr** ×
 B: **siu****ar****ᵿ**uuuu**u**b**f****Ē**kk**t**uā

Lyf þrent is réþ. Siuarþu uþ fékk'k tuá.

Threefold remedy is *réþ*. I have been able to overpower two fighters.³⁹¹

I examined the plate on one occasion in January 2015. I discuss the reading of the runes in the catalogue (no 5) and I have therefore in the following chosen to focus solely on what in my opinion is lacking in earlier research, i.e. providing commentary on Lindquist's interpretation as well as an analysis of previous proposals for reading the plate's deviant runes. I transliterate as follows:

A: **luf****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ** · -- **rrr** ×
 B: **siu****ar****ᵿ**uuu **uu****u****b****f****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****t**u ×

There are many problems with Lindquist's reading of the side which he considers the first, although I agree with him that the first rune cannot be the bind-rune **ol**, as proposed by Stephens. The masculine name **oluf**r identified by Stephens thus falls out of consideration. Lindquist's suggestion that **luf** might represent OIcel. *lyf* n. or f. 'remedy' likewise appears credible and is accepted by Steenholt Olesen (2007:97 f.). In order to recognise the word *þrent* 'threefold', however, one must first read **r** after **ᵿ**, in contravention of the usual way of reading runes, and secondly accept that the three **ᵿ**-runes, two of which have extra bows, are coordinate runes which represent **ᵿ** (3/3) **n** (2/2) and **t** (1/1). One must further accept that the rune **ᵿ** is not a coordinate rune but a doubled yew-rune, giving the reading **ĒĒ**. It is however inconsistent to identify the **ᵿ** but not the **ᵿ**-runes as doubled. A symmetrical element may also be observed whereby, in addition to these four runes being balanced, the number of branches is successively reduced. Lindquist's suggestion that these runes are twig runes is accepted in *DRI* (1:297), where the following transliteration of the plate's runes is provided:

A: **siu****ær****ᵿ**(**uuu**)(**uuu**)**b****f****ky****t**uæ
 B: **luf****ᵿ****nt** · (c)-**rrr** ×

I believe instead that runes 5–8 are balanced runes and that the bows of the **ᵿ**-runes need not be considered to be a form of reinforcement. If we unbalance the runes and count each bow as a **ᵿ**, the beginning of this side can be transliterated as **luf****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ****ᵿ**. We now have six **ᵿ**-runes which are divided into two groups, each with three **ᵿ**-runes. This corresponds to the number and grouping of the **u**-runes on the other side of the plate.

³⁹¹ "Trefalt läkemedel är *réþ*. Jag har kunnat övermanna två kämpar."

The reading /e/ of rune 6 by Lindquist is unproblematic. There are a number of certain cases of **ᚱ** representing the phoneme /e/ or /æ/ (Larsson 2002:139 f.). This interpretation is thus possible if the rune **ᚰ** actually represents **ᚱ** rather than **ᓄ**. One may observe that the sign is marked with a question mark in *DRI* and thus left untransliterated (I replace the question mark with a dash). The other certain yew-rune in this inscription is transliterated in *DRI* as **ᚹ**, which presumably is dependent on the authors' dating of the plate to the Middle Ages. It is probably for the same reason that they transliterate Lindquist's **ᚱ**-runes as **æ**.

Lindquist suggests reading the next word as *is*, 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. of the verb *vesa*. The sign which Lindquist transliterates as **ᚱᚱᚱᚱ** is very unusual. Lindquist's ingenious suggestion of reading it as a quadrupled **s**-rune deserves consideration: one might observe however that the runes of the inscription are otherwise repeated only three times. While the suggestion by Stephens of reading the sign as an older **ᚱ**-rune with four branches instead of one is interesting, I nevertheless consider Lindquist's **s**-rune proposal more convincing. It is however problematic to regard the upper branch as representing an **s**-rune: it sits too high and extends from the top of the right mainstave and thus looks more like a short-twigg rune **ᚠ**, **t**. These are however extraordinarily rare in Denmark (one of the examples is found on DR 392 from Bornholm). It is therefore not probable that the sign should be read as a bind-rune **ᚱᚱᚱᚱ**. A better alternative would be to read it as a kind of punctuation mark: a similar sign begins the inscription on GR 1. The lower part of the previous sign is damaged due to the worn area at the lower edge of the plate: I nevertheless consider that a reading of **ᚱ** is more credible than the reading **ᚱ** which is suggested in *DRI* (see my commentary in the catalogue). Lindquist is inclined to interpret the last three **r**-runes on this side of the plate as a threefold runic ideograph, *réþ*. Steenholt Olesen (2007:97) records an interesting suggestion by Jonas Nordby which involves interpreting the three runes as an abbreviation of *ráð rett rúnar*, as found on N 408. This does not however account for the **ᚱ**, **ᚹ** and **s**-runes which are also repeated six and three times.

Lindquist's reading of the bind-runes on the second side of the inscription appears to be credible. The bind-rune **ᚱᚱ** is transliterated in *DRI* as **ᚱᚹ** and in Lindquist as **ᚱᚱ**, and both variants are conceivable. The final character is transliterated as **ᚱ** by Lindquist and as **æ** in *DRI*. I am nonetheless of the opinion that it might instead be a demarcation sign. The sign's vertical line does not reach the lower edge, unlike the mainstaves of the other runes on this side. Its diagonal line is moreover longer than its vertical one. The sign should be regarded as a large cross rather than a rune (see Figure 5.4 in the catalogue).

Lindquist's interpretation of this side contains several problems. One might observe that he interprets *uḅ fékk'k* as 'I have been able to overpower', although it should instead be interpreted as 'I got back' with the verb *fá* in 1 pers. sg. pret. ind. and with the prep. *uḅ*, which can add the idea of 'back' to

the meaning of the verb. I would like to note that Lindquist's suggestion of reading *ub fékk*'k on the reverse is not completely impossible, although the early form *ub* of the preposition is remarkable. The dating of the plate to the eleventh or twelfth century would favour a form *um*. Lindquist also identifies the words 'two fighters' in the runic sequences **siuarþu** and **tua**. He presumably regards **siuarþu** as an appellative with the meaning 'keeper of victory or battle' in acc. pl.

If we return to the beginning of the inscription, and to my transliteration, we note that the sequence **lufþþþ** is reminiscent of the *lyfrūnar* 'healing-runes' of the Skänninge plate, although the runes **una** have been replaced by **þ**-runes. This effect is lost if one characterises the three bows of the first **þ**-rune as a decorative element. Källström has however noted (pers. comm.) that runes five to eight in the sequence could also represent <**unar**> and that they may constitute only randomly created forms. Steenholt Olesen (2007:98) also proposes the word *lyfrūnar* here, although this involves reading the **r**-rune as an abbreviated *rūnar*.

Side A might thus contain either three **þ**-runes, if one counts only main-staves, or six **þ**-runes, if one counts all the bows. Side B contains six **u**-runes, which comprise two groups with three **u**-runes in each. A good parallel to these groups is created by reading six **þ**-runes on side A, which in turn comprise two groups. There are also three **r**-runes on the obverse. If we now consider only the repeated runes, the following sequences emerge:

A: **þþþ þþþ rrr**
 B: **uuu uuu**

This brings to mind the wooden stick from Roskilde (DR 247) with its four sides covered by **u** and **þ**-runes, which are considered to be magical signs devoid of lexical meaning. The difference is that our inscription contains a partly linguistic meaning and that the runes which are repeated are clearly grouped: six **þ**-runes on side A, six **u**-runes on side B and three **r**-runes on side A. It is thus tempting to entertain the idea that the inscription might contain a cypher of the same type as the formula *pistil-kistil-mistil* on Ög 181 or **þmkiiissstttiilll** on DR 239. I refrain however from suggesting any such interpretation here.

The inscription on the reverse contains the OWS personal name *Sigvarðr*, probably in the accusative. The runic sequence **ub** could however represent the (perfectivising) expletive particle *of* (cf. Sö 159, Sö 164, Sm 35, Vg 67), which is carved as **ub** on DR 81 and DR 338. The final two runes **tu** can be interpreted as corresponding to an OWS noun *tý* n. or *tæ* n. 'help, benefit?' (*Norrøn ord-bok*). The back of the plate could thus be normalised as *Sigvarð of fekk*'k *tý* and translated as 'I got help for Sigvard'.

6.2 Fragmentary interpreted Danish plates

6.2.1 The Skørrebrovej plate (DR DKBh63), Bornholm

A bronze plate (Figure 56) with two lines of runes on each side was found in 2005 by a metal detector on Skørrebrovej, Vester Marie parish, Bornholm. The object is 39 mm long, 15 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick. It has been dated on the basis of runic typology to 1000–1150. The object is now kept at the National Museum of Denmark with the inventory number D 199/2006.

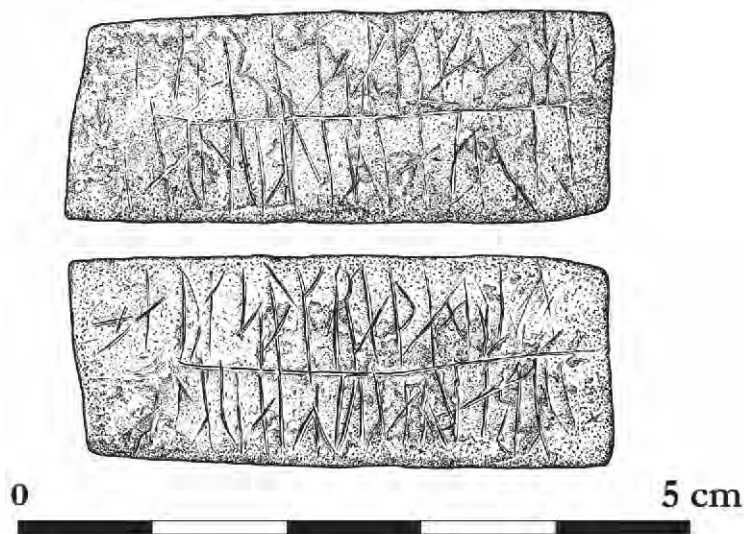


Figure 56. The Skørrebrovej plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Lisbeth Imer transliterates the inscription as follows in DK:

A: ...**hukri**kunuak ¶ ...**loskr**uk...**h**-

B: **uk**parnašumiauk... ¶ **auks**amraþa-...

Imer believes that the inscription may be lexical and in that case composed in Old Danish (see DK no Bh 63):

Certain sequences can be read as possibly meaningful. The sequence **löskr**³⁹² (on the A-side) may constitute a word with the meaning ‘dull, weak, incompetent’. On the B-side, the sequence **auk** (twice) might be the word ‘and’, the sequence **samraþa** is possibly a word with the meaning ‘involved in a decision or enterprise’.³⁹³

³⁹² Imer’s transliteration: here she transliterates the rune **ᚠ** as **ö** rather than **o**.

³⁹³ “Enkelte sekvenser kan udlæses som muligt meningsgivende. Sekvensen **löskr** (A-siden) kan udgøre et ord med betydningen ‘sløv, slap, udygtig’. På B-siden kan sekvensen **auk** (to gange) være ordet ‘og’, sekvensen **samraþa** er muligvis et ord med betydningen ‘delagtig i at beslutte, foretage sig noget’.”

I examined the plate in January of 2015 and August of 2017, and my report on the reading is found in the catalogue (no 3). I transliterate:

A: **luṣṭhuḱur i kunua-... ᚦ + --boskr̥kufu-h--**

B: **uk barna i tumiaukof... ᚦ + auksamraþa-...**

There can be no doubt that the inscription is lexical and it seems to constitute good wishes for a young couple: **luṣṭhuḱur i kunu a-...** *lysthug(u)r i konu* or *lysthugr konu ā* ‘lust for a woman’, **uk barna i tumi auk** *ok barna i tōmi ok* ‘and also in (good) time be with child’, **auk samraþa** *ok samrāða* ‘and be in consultation’. In **luṣṭhuḱur** I see a counterpart to an unattested compound OIcel. *lyst-hugr* m. This word is composed in the same way as many other compounds featuring *-hugr*. Among attested compounds with this second element we find: *ástarhugr* ‘feeling of love’; *fárhugr* ‘feeling of enmity, evil’; *víghugr* ‘desire for battle’; *miskunnarhugr* ‘merciful mood’ etc. (*Norrøn ordbok*). The sequence in line 2 on side A, **boskr̥kufu-h--**, presumably contains a wish for housing, household items or livestock. It is difficult to identify suitable words corresponding to the runic sequence **bos** apart from OIcel. *bæs* m. sg. gen. of *bær* ‘dwelling’ or *bús* n. sg. gen. of *bú* ‘house, dwelling, property which belongs to the household, livestock, cattle’ (*Norrøn ordbok*). The **r**-runes in the runic sequence **kr̥kufu** might represent a vowel, e.g. /e/, /æ/ or /y/, but I have been unsuccessful in interpreting this sequence.

6.2.2 The Uppåkra plate (DR NOR2000;8C), Scania

This bronze plate (Figure 57) was found by metal detector in 1999 during archaeological investigations in Uppåkra, Uppåkra parish. According to an email from the archaeologist Birgitta Piltz-Williams (30 October 2015), the plate was found in the plough layer. No systematic archaeological excavation has been carried out at the findplace, however. Other finds made at the same detecting have been dated to the younger Iron Age and Vendel Age.

The plate is 25 mm long, 7 mm wide and 0.8 mm thick. Its short right side is bent upwards and both short sides seem to have been broken off. The long sides are not completely straight but rounded in parallel. This rounding together with the content of the inscription, which can hardly be placed within the same genre of *spells* as other lexical runic plates, indicates that we are here dealing with a different type of object. I could have excluded the ‘plate’ from the corpus of this dissertation by adding a further delimitation to the definition of a runic plate, i.e. that a runic plate does not have sides rounded in parallel. I have instead chosen to retain it since it is not possible to dismiss the possibility of a magical character for the inscription.

The plate is kept at the Historical Museum at Lund University with the inventory number 31000:3574. The inscription runs on only one side and has been read and interpreted by Marie Stoklund (2000:8 f.): **...-ilkar × un × ra...** Stoklund suggests two alternative interpretations: either that it comprises three



Figure 57. The Uppåkra plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

personal names, or two personal names and a verb *unna* in the imperative or present tense.

The dash in Stoklund's reading represents a small line in the broken-off left short side of the plate, which could be the branch of an *h*-rune or part of a punctuation mark. Rune 3 *l* can also be read as *n*. The branch is a little too high in relation to the mainstave to be a certain *n* but still too low to be a certain *l* (see comments and photographs in the catalogue, no 9). I read the other runes in the inscription in the same way as Stoklund:

...*hiṅkar* × *un* × *ra*... OR: ... × *iṅkar* × *un* × *ra*...

The inscription contains the runes *a* and *n* with unilateral branches. Also deserving of commentary is the punctuation mark between *n* and *r*. It seems to be a later addition as there is not enough space for it between the runes. The shape gives the impression of having been hastily executed since unlike the previous punctuation mark it does not form a clear cross but rather resembles a check-mark.

If one accepts Stoklund's suggestion that the text consists of three names, the first could be a compound consisting of the first element *hin*, *in*, *hil* or *il* and the masculine second element *kar*. This allows many possibilities: *Æinkārr*, *Hild-kārr*, *Hæilkārr*, *Illkārr*. None of these names is attested in runic inscriptions, however. In names ending in *-kārr*, there is often a semantic correspondence between the name elements. Kousgård Sørensen (1974:112) notes that:

Names ending in *-kar* can all be 'translated', which is not the case with names such as *Thorbiørn*, *Frøsten*, *Asløg*, *Gunfred* etc. [- - -] The reason is that the elements exist or existed as words in the language. They thus first fulfilled the function of nick-names and thereafter first names, a fairly normal development.³⁹⁴

The adjective *kārr* < **kauura-* originally means 'crooked, bent', later developing into 'stubborn, belligerent, reluctant' (< 'curved in mindset') and to 'curly, shaggy-haired' (< 'curved in shape'; Kousgård Sørensen 1974:112; see also Peterson 2007:147). Names containing this second element therefore usually describe a feature of character or appearance. Kousgård Sørensen (p. 112), for

³⁹⁴ "Navnene på *-kar* kan alle 'oversættes', hvad der ikke er tilfældet ved navnene som *Thorbiørn*, *Frøsten*, *Asløg*, *Gunfred* osv. [- - -] Grunden er, at dannelserne eksisterer eller har eksisteret som ord i sproget. De har da først fået funktion som tilnavne og dernæst som fornavne, et ganske normalt udviklingsforløb."

example, lists the following East Norse names, all of which show the compound *-kǫrr* with the first secondary meaning: *Afkǫrr* ‘the overly-belligerent’, *Styrkǫrr* ‘the eager-for-battle’, *Æfkǫrr* ‘the doubtful’. Here also belongs the name *Öðinkǫrr*, which Kousgård Sørensen (p. 116) interprets as ‘quick or inclined to rage or madness’.³⁹⁵ The other secondary meaning is represented in three West Norse names translated by Kousgård Sørensen as *Lambkǫrr* ‘the curly-like-a-lamb’, *Punnkǫrr* ‘the thinly-curved’ and *Gullkǫrr* ‘the golden-curved’.³⁹⁶ To these can be added the following runic names: *Rauðkǫrr* ‘the red-curved’ on U Fv1946;258, *Blākǫri* ‘Blackcurl, the black-curved’ on ÖI 66 as well as *Hvītkǫrr* ‘the white-curved’ on U 258.

One can then attempt to translate the compounds suggested above for the runic sequence **hilkar/ilkar** or **hinkar/inkar**: *Hildkǫrr* ‘the eager-for-battle’, *Illkǫrr* ‘the evil-minded’, *Hæilkǫrr* ‘the happy-minded’ and *Æinkǫrr* ‘the single-minded’. As a parallel to the last name, we can note *Æinrāði* ‘the self-reliant, headstrong’ on DR 114 and *Æinriði* ‘he who rides alone, the lone rider’ or ‘autocrat’ on Sö 166. Which of these four names might appear on the Uppåkra plate is however unclear.

The second name might be a masculine name *Unn*, while the third name begins with *Ra*[...] and could be either a masculine or feminine name.

Stoklund’s second suggestion identifies two names with the verb *unna* ‘to love’ in between. The verb could be in either 2 pers. sg. imp. or in an analogical form *unn* (rather than the usual *ann*) in 1 or 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. Stoklund (2000:9) also suggests that the plate “may have served a magical purpose”.³⁹⁷ It might then be reasonable to interpret *unn* as the imperative form of the verb *unna*. In this case, I prefer to reconstruct the name *Ra*[...] as a feminine name, whereby the inscription can be understood as an exhortation: ... *kǫrr, unn Ra* ...! e.g. ‘[En]kar, love *Ra*[gñhild]!’ One can also consider the inscription non-magical, a message or a confession of love: ... *kǫrr unn Ra* ... e.g. ‘[En]kar loves *Ra*[gñhild]’.

6.3 Uninterpreted Danish runic plates of type A

6.3.1 Lund plate 1 (DR Fv1993;226), Scania

A small piece of metal attached to a metal plaque was found in 1990 in a Viking-Age settlement area in Lund (now in the ‘Gyllenkrok’ block) and archaeologically dated to the eleventh century (Stoklund in Snædal & al. 1993: 226). The plate has traces of a broken round hole. It is thus a kind of pendant which has been broken and repaired with the help of a metal plaque (Figure 58). The material of neither the plate nor the plaque has been determined. Together

³⁹⁵ ‘som har let ved, har tilbøjelighed for raseri, galskab’

³⁹⁶ *Lambkǫrr* ‘den lammekrøllede’, *Punnkǫrr* ‘den tyndkrøllede’, *Gullkǫrr* ‘den gyldentkrøllede’

³⁹⁷ “kan have tjent et magisk formål”

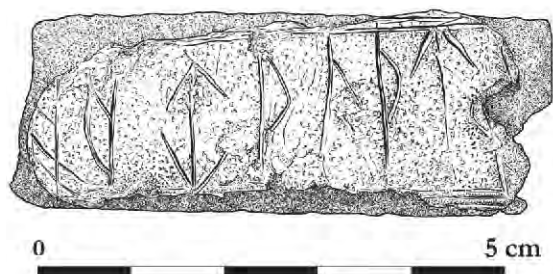


Figure 58. Lund plate 1. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

with the plaque, the plate is 55 mm long, 20 mm wide and 4 mm thick. It is kept at the Lund Museum of Cultural History (*Kulturhistoriska museet i Lund*) with the inventory number 76420:172.

No X-ray investigation has been carried out to establish whether the inscription continues on the reverse, but the runes are at least observable on the obverse. Marie Stoklund (Snædal & al. 1993:226) regards the inscription as consisting of seven to eight signs, of which “apart from a **t**-rune (no 2 from the right), the other signs are **þ**-runes – mirrored and doubled variants”.³⁹⁸ She therefore suggests that the object is magical, since **þ**-runes of such a character are found in a number of magical inscriptions. Her transliteration can be reconstructed as: **þþþþþþþ**.

I investigated the plate once (in January 2015), and my transliteration of the inscription is as follows (a commentary can be found in the catalogue, no 6):

A: **þ**₁**o** ← → **t**₅**þ****o****þ****t**-

The first two runes of the inscription, **oþ**, are inverted and turned to the left. They should presumably be read from right to left: **þo**. Runes 3–8 are however read from left to right: **tþoþt**-. Rune 3 has the form **↓** and may therefore be read as a balanced rune **t** of the same type as occurs on the Ladoga plate. Rune 4 may be a bind-rune of **þþ**. Runes 5–7 are conventional runes. The inscription thus contains, according to my reading, no balanced **þ**-runes nor **þ**-runes with doubled bows, and no more than one or possibly two unconventional runes (rr. 3 and 4). I agree with Stoklund that it may have been an object of magic (an amulet), as is also indicated by the shape. As concerns the inscription, it is not possible to establish the extent to which it may be lexical.

³⁹⁸ “Bortset fra en **t**-rune (nr 2 fra højre) er de øvrige tegn **þ**-runer – spejlvendte og dobbelte varianter.”

6.4 Uninterpreted Danish plates of type B and fragments

6.4.1 Lund plate 2 (DR Fv1988;238 †), Scania

A bronze plate with runes was found in 1984 in a grave in a large churchyard belonging to an early stave church (St. Clemens 9, Lund, Scania). In the grave was the skeleton of what was judged to be a man aged 20–25, with the plate on his left shoulder (Stoklund in Snædal & al. 1988:238). The plate is 40 mm long, 15 mm wide and 1 mm thick. It seems in principle to be intact in shape (with the exception of some flaked-off parts in the middle), and it can therefore be classified as type B. The grave was in the lowest layer of the churchyard and could therefore be dated 990–1000. The plate is now supposed to be stored in Lund (Lund Museum of Cultural History 71839:2150), but could not be found by staff of the museum in advance of my visit in January 2015. According to earlier photographs, the plate is heavily damaged by corrosion, and some pieces of metal have flaked off (Figure 59). There are runes on the obverse while the reverse evidently has some carved lines but no runes. There are two rows of inscription. Marie Stoklund (in Snædal & al. 1988:238 f.) concludes that the inscription consists primarily of rune-like signs but she simultaneously suggests that the second row might contain the runes **-t|j-i-u**, of which the last is an inverted **u**. The first row is more damaged by corrosion but Stoklund (p. 238) nevertheless suggests that it has “a row of **u**-like signs, but veers on the right side into something symmetrical, ornamental rather than like writing.”³⁹⁹ According to Stoklund, the find context indicates without any doubt that the plate was a grave amulet.

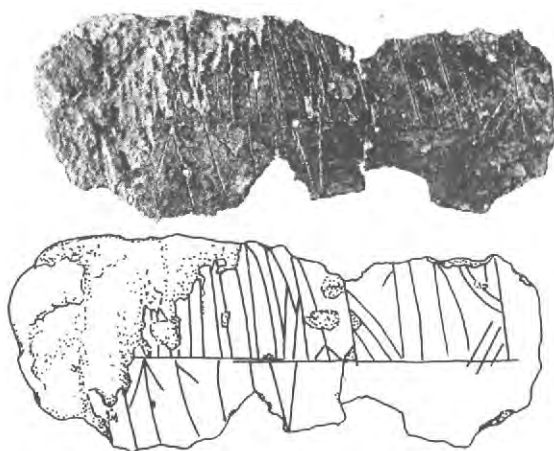


Figure 59. Lund plate 2. Photograph by Marie Stoklund. The drawing was made by M. Cinthio (Lund Museum of Cultural History).

³⁹⁹ “en række **u**-lignende tegn, men glider i højre side over i noget symmetrisk, mere ornamentalt end skriftlignende”

It is possible that the inscription on the plate had no lexical meaning. At the same time it should not be forgotten that the plate also had conventional runes in row 2. These could possibly have been interpreted had the inscription been preserved in its entirety.

6.4.2 The Lockarp plate (DR NOR2003;20), Scania

This bronze plate was discovered in 1984 in a grave in a large churchyard within the area of the old village at Lockarp (CT 8), Lockarp parish. The find was made during archaeological excavations of a Viking settlement. The plate does not seem to be broken, according to Helmer Gustavson (2003b:20), and it can therefore be classified as type B. Its length is 39 mm, its width 14 mm and thickness c. 1 mm. It is the property of the Museums of Malmö (*Malmö museer*) with inventory number 12756:19. The object has been archaeologically dated to around 1000–1050.

Runes are found only on the obverse (Figure 60). Gustavson (2003b:21) suggests two possible transliterations: *t̃t̃t̃aþa* or, less certainly, *t̃t̃t̃a*. He also suggests that rune 2 might be a bind-rune, *ar*, giving a possible reading of *t̃art̃aþa*. The plate thus evidences one or possibly two bind-runes. I have not had the opportunity to examine the runic plate myself.

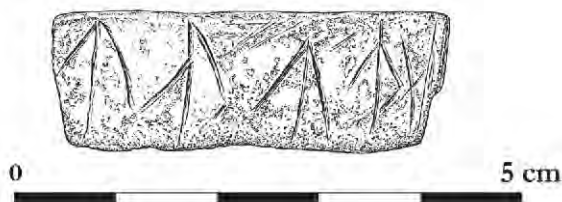


Figure 60. The Lockarp plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on sketches and photographs by the author.

6.4.3 The Gyldensgård plate (DR NOR2004;8), Bornholm

The plate (Figure 61) was discovered south of Gyldensgård, Østermarie parish, in 2002 with the help of a metal detector, and has been dated 1050–1200. One of the short sides appears to have broken off and I am therefore unable to classify it as either Type A or B. It is 60 mm long, 12–13 mm wide and 2–3 mm thick. It is owned by the National Museum of Denmark (KNM: D 272/2004) but kept at Bornholm Museum (under inventory number 3195×3).

The inscription runs over both sides and is divided into two lines on each. Stoklund & al. (2004b:8) transliterate the inscription as follows:

A: ... 𐌺 𐌱𐌹𐌸𐌰...

B: 𐌰𐌱 × ... 𐌺 + 𐌰 × 𐌹𐌺𐌰...---

The plate had not been cleaned when I examined it in January 2015, and the carving lines were filled with a material resembling soil. I therefore wish to emphasise that my reading is preliminary (all comments on the reading can be found in the catalogue, no 2):

A: ...f... 𐌺 ...𐌱𐌹-...

B: ...f... × -𐌰 𐌺 𐌰 × 𐌹𐌺𐌰...

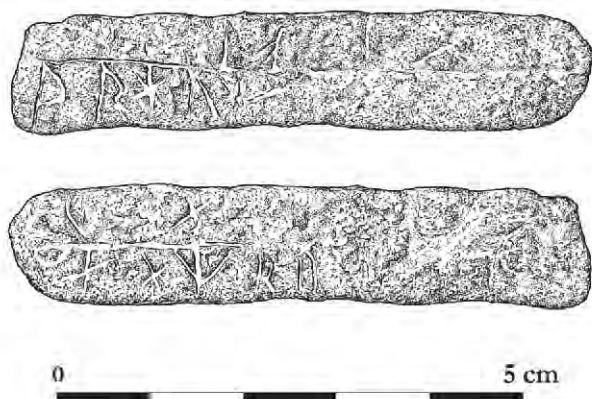


Figure 61. The Gyldensgård plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

It is interesting to note that the inscription seems to have been written in boustrophedon, and that the distance between the runes seems unusually great. The runes appear to be conventional but unfortunately in the current circumstances little more can be said about the inscription.

6.5 Conclusions

This investigation of the eight Viking-Age Danish runic plates shows that half are definitely lexical. As for the other half, their non-lexical character cannot be firmly established as they are either too fragmentary or the readings too uncertain.

The runic shapes on the Danish plates as well as the certain runic words are reviewed in Chapter 8. It can be noted here that three plates have both conventional and unconventional runes, i.e. the Roskilde plate and the two plates from Lund; the remaining five plates are composed entirely in conventional runes. The investigation has also resulted in more certain readings of a num-

ber of plates (these are provided in the catalogue) as well as two new interpretations suggested for the Roskilde plate and the Skørrebrovej plate respectively.

7 Runic plates outside Scandinavia

... -arla ... runar ...

... arla ... rūnar

‘to the east/west(?) ... runes’

Gs 17

7.1 The Deerness plate from Orkney (Or 21), Scotland

A copper plate (Figure 62) with runes was discovered in 2009 during archaeological excavations in Deerness Brough (Mainland, Orkney). Its length is 65 mm, width between 9 and 10 mm and thickness 1 mm. It has an elliptical suspension hole. The plate was found in what has been called Structure 25, which Gerrard & al. (2010:5) describe as “a complex stone structure of many phases, only the last few of which were excavated. It had been converted from a dwelling into a shorter paved and divided building without a hearth. [- - -] The investigated phases of Structure 25 produced finds of tenth- to twelfth-century date.” The plate was found in phase R, a period when the floor was covered with stone, occurring after the primary dwelling had been converted into a narrower complex with a different division of rooms. The function of the complex remains unclear, however (p. 10 f.): “perhaps [...] a storehouse or (unheated) workshop”.

The metal of the plate is heavily corroded: both short sides as well as the edges of the long sides, particularly near both ends, are covered by corrosion. X-ray investigation has shown that the metal behind the corrosion is so damaged that carvings are no longer visible (Hines 2013:1). The inscription has four rows: two on each side. It can be estimated to have consisted of 76–78 runes, of which approximately one third have been destroyed by corrosion. If the inscription had been preserved in its entirety, it would have been one of the longest known from Orkney. The plate is currently stored at The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research in Cambridge, England.

The first evaluation of the inscription was made by Michael Barnes, who used photographs to conclude that the object contained “unintelligible runic inscriptions on both sides” (Gerrard & al. 2010:2). The inscription has also been investigated by John Hines (2013:2), who in principle came to the same conclusion: “a systematic and patient attempt to identify the characters in the text and to interpret it does, ultimately, lead to the conclusion that if the maker’s intention was to produce a pseudo-text that is mystifying and distracting, that goal was amply achieved.” Hines discusses some aspects of his reading and provides a detailed and useful drawing of the inscription; his transliteration is as follows (p. 5):

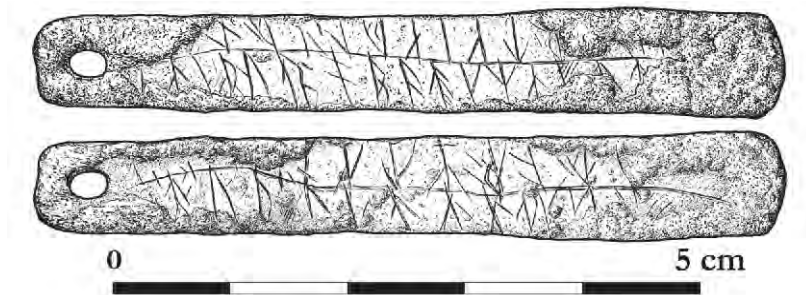


Figure 62. The Deerness plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

A: $\text{-}\widehat{\text{a}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{o}}\widehat{\text{p}} : \widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{r}} : \text{-}\widehat{\text{b}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{a}}\text{-}\text{km--} \text{¶} \text{r}\widehat{\text{t}}\text{l}\widehat{\text{k}}\text{i}\text{k}\text{u--}\text{p} : \text{-}$
 B: $\widehat{\text{o}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{p}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{i}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{u}}\text{-}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{p}}\widehat{\text{k}}\text{--} \text{¶} \widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{p}} : \text{-}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{b}} : \text{k}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{a}}\text{kn-}$

Hines does not however provide a classic runological report on the reading, and I therefore do so in the catalogue. He concludes his report with the following words (p. 5 f.): “It may seem surprising that a relatively rare runic amulet should have been inscribed in such a careless-looking way, but [...] actually being meaningless best explains this object and its inscription.”

I examined the plate once, in November 2014. The inscription does initially appear to be carelessly carved and lacking in linguistic meaning. This impression is however due to most of the runes being difficult to identify, as well as the fact that the framing lines which separate the rows on both sides are not straight but somewhat curved. At the same time, two points can be observed: the inscription contains conventional runes as well as possible punctuation marks. It is further of interest to note that the inscription seems to have a great number of bind-runes. My transliteration is as follows (with commentary and photographs in the catalogue, no 1):

A: $\text{---}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{i}} : \text{r}\widehat{\text{n}}\widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{r}} : \text{o}\widehat{\text{b}}\widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{a}}\text{t}\widehat{\text{u}}\text{nkm}\widehat{\text{a}}\text{n---} \text{¶} \text{---}\text{r}\widehat{\text{t}}\text{k}\widehat{\text{i}}\text{k}\widehat{\text{p}}\widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{u}}\text{n} : \text{i}\widehat{\text{p}}\widehat{\text{o}}\widehat{\text{l}}\text{n...}$
 B: $\text{---}\widehat{\text{t}}\widehat{\text{r}}\widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{p}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{i}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{r}}\widehat{\text{a}} : \widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{p}}\widehat{\text{k}}\text{--} \text{¶} \text{---}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{r}}\widehat{\text{i}}\widehat{\text{n}}\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{b}} : \text{m}\widehat{\text{u}}\widehat{\text{l}}\widehat{\text{u}}\text{k--} \text{---}$

Orkney is an unusual place where one quarter of all the inscriptions contain bind-runes. Mindy MacLeod (2002:255 f.) notes that bind-runes are found in exactly one third of the inscriptions from Maeshowe. She argues against Barnes’ assumption that the bind-runes in the Maeshowe inscriptions should not be viewed as the expression of a conventional scribal practice (p. 256): “In fact the straightforward nature of most of the binds, as well as the numbers involved and the familiarity with which they are used can probably be taken to indicate an accustomed scribal convention.” Beyond the Maeshowe inscriptions, which should be regarded as exceptional due to the probable Norwegian origin of the carvers, and their extremely skilful execution (Barnes 1994a:40 f.), there are three further Orcadian inscriptions with reasonably certain bind-runes: Or 1 has the bind-rune $\widehat{\text{o}}\widehat{\text{l}}$ or $\widehat{\text{t}}\widehat{\text{a}}$ (Barnes & Page 2006:56, 155), Or 3 has $\widehat{\text{a}}\widehat{\text{r}}$ (Barnes & Page 2006:159; Macleod 2002:256)

and Or 6 has **an**. These three inscriptions alone make Orkney the place richest in bind-runes in the British Isles, where there are otherwise three inscriptions with bind-runes (E 1, Sc 7 and Sh 7). The carving of ligatures was thus not a foreign practice for the rune-carvers of Orkney, and it therefore seems reasonable to try to resolve the peculiar runic forms of the Deerness plate into bind-runes.

The inscription on the Deerness plate may be lexical, and to demonstrate this I provide below some suggestions for interpretation which are far from unproblematic; I have normalised these to Old Icelandic. If one is permitted to reverse some of the inscription's many bind-runes, one can isolate the word **runar** *rúnar* in row 1 on side A instead of **runar**. Such bind-runes with the reading sequence reversed occur in both Viking-Age and mediaeval inscriptions – see MacLeod 2002 'reverse-read binds' in tables 16 (p. 145), 18 (p. 191), 20 (p. 201), 22 (p. 212) and 24 (p. 233). I thus consider that it is worth attempting to read some of the plate's bind-runes in this manner. The runic sequence **kmān** can be interpreted as *(e)k man* 'I remember'. The lack of **i** or **a** before the **k**-rune to render the word *ek* is problematic; on the other hand, there is a possibility that the **a**-rune in the previous rune should be double-read (cf. **a** for /e/ in Sc 11 **aft** *ept* and IR 10 **an** *á en* etc.). One could interpret **rtkikpuūn** in the following row as *[bo]rt gekk(t) þú nú*, (literally) 'you went away now' (see Noreen 1923: 362, § 534:2d, where it is noted that the ending *t* can be omitted in this case). Supporting the reading of the bind-rune **ūn** in this sequence as **nū** is the fact that the two **u**-runes would otherwise stand alongside each other, which is unusual in Viking-Age inscriptions. The phrase 'you went away now' would constitute a striking parallel to the Canterbury formula (E DR419) and Sigtuna plate 1, despite the verb presumably being in the preterite rather than the imperative here.⁴⁰⁰ My aim with this suggestion for interpretation is simply to show that it is legitimate to question the description of the Deerness plate as incontrovertibly non-lexical.

7.2 Runic plates from contemporary Russia

7.2.1 Gorodišče plates 1 and 2 (RU Melnikova2001;181 and RU Melnikova2001;189 respectively)

7.2.1.1 Find circumstances and condition

Two bronze plates (Figures 63 and 64) engraved with runes were found in 1983 during excavations led by E. N. Nosov of the place known since the nineteenth century as Rjurikovo Gorodišče, 'Rurik's ancient town' (earlier simply Gorodišče, 'Ancient Town'). This is the remains of a fortified settlement located

⁴⁰⁰ A possible alternative is that we have here a variant of the verb, i.e. Oldcel. **ginga* 'go' (see Noreen 1923, § 504 note 1). Although it is unclear which imperative form this verb would have taken, it is not improbable that it would have been *gekk*.

two kilometres from the centre of Novgorod, although now within the boundaries of the city. This is probably the ‘Novgorod’ which is referred to in the oldest East Slavic (‘Rus’) chronicles. I choose, for the sake of simplicity, to refer to the objects as the Gorodišče plates rather than the Rjurikovo Gorodišče plates.

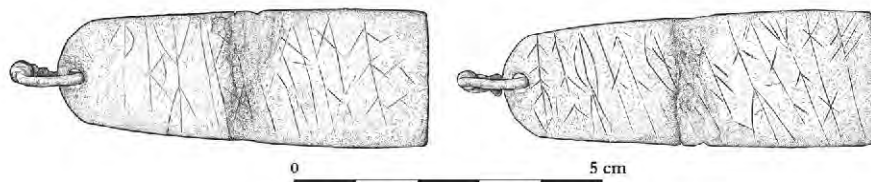


Figure 63. Gorodišče plate 1. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

Plate 1 was dug out of a pit containing household waste. Ceramics dating to the time between 950 and the early 1000s were found in the same trench (Mel'nikova 2001:180). The length of the plate is 58 mm, the width from 16 to 21.5 mm and the thickness 1 mm. It has a hole through which is passed a metal wire which forms a loop for hanging. The plate was folded in the middle when it was found. Although it has since been straightened out, the surface of the obverse is damaged in the crease caused by the folding and it is difficult to distinguish the runes there. It was probably not folded deliberately. The inscription runs over both sides; it is not divided into rows and the runes cover the entire surface of both sides of the plate.

Plate 2 is 49 mm long, 12–13 mm wide and 1 mm thick. It is thus slightly smaller than plate 1. It also has a hole but no remaining wire. It was found in approximately the same place as plate 1 but was lying in a disturbed cultural layer at a depth of 0.6–0.8 metres. Its stratigraphic placement thus provides little information for a possible dating, but the inscription, which occurs only on the obverse, coincides with the inscription on one of the sides of plate 1. Plate 2 may therefore be contemporaneous with plate 1. Both objects are kept at the Novgorod State Historical Museum (NHM) with inventory numbers 1650/8 and 1643/3 respectively.

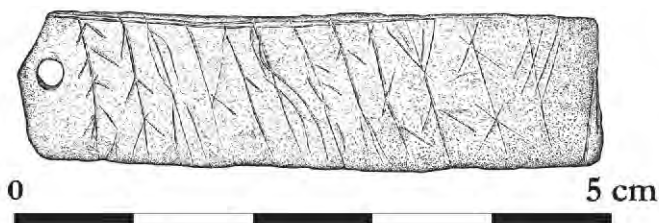


Figure 64. Gorodišče plate 2. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

The Gorodišče plates have been interpreted by E. A. Mel'nikova (1994:232–239; largely the same text is reproduced in 2001:180–189), who regards them as encrypted. She suggests that they may show a mixture of older runes, balanced runes, runes with non-graphematic branches, enhanced runes, coordinate runes and bind-runes. One must however question whether a plate with 23 or 24 signs can really contain so many different principles of encryption. Let us therefore take a closer look at her transliterations and interpretations (2001: 182, 188):⁴⁰¹

Plate 1

A: **gwarifarlad** 1/3(**t**)

1 5 10

B: **parniškparaki** 2/3(**u**)

15 20 24

Plate 2

A: **parniškparaki** 2/3(**u**)

1 5 10

Mel'nikova makes a laudable attempt to crack the complicated code of the inscriptions and it is possible that she is correct in her assumption that they evidence a combination of several principles of encryption. Her reading does however invite scepticism, in particular the suggestion that the inscriptions feature runes with non-graphematic branches, since she is unsuccessful in clearly rationalising which lines should be excluded from analysis and which should remain. This is despite her explanation of the means of encryption she reconstructs, which involves removing pairs of short downward-pointing lines to the left and right of the mainstave. The pair has to form a kind of roof **Λ**, although the lines do not need to extend from the same point on the mainstave (see also Mel'nikova 1987:165 f., where the same principle is presented in English). This method does not however explain why, for example, rune 14 on plate 1 is read by Mel'nikova as **a** instead of **i** while rune 23, which looks like a bind-rune of **hh**, has all of its branches removed and is transformed into an **i**.

Mel'nikova's interpretation has been discussed by Birkmann (1995:274–276), who however restricts his comments to her reading, about which he has strong reservations. I therefore wish to briefly discuss Mel'nikova's full interpretation and thereafter the various methods of (de)ryption which she applies. While my analysis does not render her interpretation any more convincing, I nevertheless believe her work merits close investigation; it is so difficult to interpret this type of runic inscription that every attempt deserves consideration. Mel'nikova interprets the inscription on plate 1 as follows (the normalisation into Old Icelandic and the Russian translation are hers (pp. 184, 188), while the translation into English is Mindy McLeod's):

⁴⁰¹ In her transliteration, Mel'nikova reads rune 12 as an uncertain coordinate rune (1/3), although in the normalisation and translation she accepts it as **t** with no question mark.

A: **g** varr í fǫrland **t**.

(Or: **g** varr í farland **t**.)

B: Þarnisk þær eigi **u**

A: **g** защищенный [на пути] в опасную землю/в опасной земле **t**.

(Или: **g** защищенный во время морского путешествия **t**.)

B: Да не будешь ты лишен мужской силы!

A: 'g protected [on the way] to a dangerous country/in a dangerous country **t**.

(Or: g protected on the sea **t**.)'

B: 'May you not lack manly strength!'

This suggested interpretation is satisfactory on a literary level as a protective spell for a male traveller to a foreign country. Mel'nikova's reading of plate 2 is the same as for the reverse of plate 1. She regards plate 2 as a copy of plate 1 containing a copying error; this in turn leads her to the conclusion that the carver of plate 2 was either less skilled in runes than the carver of plate 1 or in a hurry. As will be shown in the discussion, I question whether plate 2 evidences a copying error.

Mel'nikova regards runes 1 and 12 as framing the spell on the obverse. She reads rune 1 **g** as an ideograph for the word 'god' or 'gods' and rune 12 as an ideograph for the god Tyr. She suggests reading rune 12 as a coordinate rune 1/3 **t**, despite this contravening the usual method of carving: she operates with what is conventionally the first futhark family or *ætt* (**tbmlr**) here acting as the third. The third *ætt* is nonetheless the expected **fupork** for the other coordinate rune on side B (r. 24 **u**) in her proposal. Mel'nikova seeks support for her suggested interpretation of rune 1 **g** in runic inscriptions on Kufic coins. According to Hammarberg & Rispling (1985:66), the word 'god' occurs 839 times in younger runes on a total of 408 Viking-Age coins, appearing in older runes 226 times on a total of 147 coins.⁴⁰² There are even supposed to be six coins with both variants, younger and older runes, while on two coins (pp. 71–72, nos 16 and 32) the word *guð* allegedly occurs together with the god's name *Þórr*. The results of Hammarberg & Rispling have however been strongly challenged by James Knirk (pers. comm.). He considers that there is barely one certain attestation of the word 'god' among the suggested 839 instances; Mel'nikova could hardly have been aware of this serious criticism in her interpretation.

The runic sequence **war** is interpreted as the Olcel. word *varr* 'aware of something, informed about something, cautious' (Fritzner),⁴⁰³ which Mel'nikova translates as 'protected' ('защищенный'). I consider this too far removed from the actual meaning of the word, despite its relationship to the verb *verja*, which means 'keep away, defend'; it is also problematic that /rr/ is here represented with an unetymological **r**-rune. The next runic sequence, **ifarlād**, is interpreted by her as *í fǫrland* 'on the way to a dangerous country/in a dangerous

⁴⁰² Their investigation comprised just over 35 000 coins, both Western and Oriental.

⁴⁰³ 'opmærksom paa noget, underrettet om noget, forsigtig'

country’ or *ífarland* ‘on the sea/during a sea voyage’.⁴⁰⁴ The compound *fárland* ‘dangerous land’ is not attested but appears possible since other OIcel. compounds with both the first element *fár-* and the second element *land* occur. The compound *farland* is recorded in *Lexicon Poeticum* with the translation ‘ship’s land, sea’. The meaning ‘protected on the way to the sea’ seems forced, but a meaning of ‘protected on the sea’ would require the word to be in the dative, *farlandi*. The first compound, *fárland*, thus seems more probable.

Side B begins, in Mel’nikova’s reading, with the runic sequence **parnišk**, which she interprets as the OIcel. reflexive verb *þarnask* or *þarfnask* ‘lack, need’ in sg. pres. subj. She interprets the runic sequence **par** as the pers. pron. in 2 pers. sg. dat. *þær* ‘you’ and **aki** as adv. *eigi* ‘not’. The final rune is interpreted as a twig rune 2/3 = **u**. The rune is regarded as an ideograph with the symbolic meaning of *úrr* ‘aurochs, strength’. The phrase *þarnisk þær eigi úr(s)!* ‘May you not lack manly strength!’ appears lexically, grammatically and syntactically possible but the reading is, as we shall see, unfortunately not viable.

7.2.1.3 The runes of the Gorodišče plates: new transliteration

I have twice examined plate 1 with a stereomicroscope: in January 2009 at the Novgorod State Historical Museum and in March 2013 at the State Historical Museum (GIM) in Moscow. I have also examined plate 2 with a stereomicroscope, but only once, in January 2009 at NHM. Despite my making a further two attempts to gain access to the plates at the museum in Novgorod, the officials responsible for the collection were most reluctant to let me re-examine them. My report on the reading is presented in the catalogue, where I discuss possible readings of every rune. I follow Mel’nikova’s division of sides but find a smaller number of runes on the obverse of plate 1.

Plate 1 can be transliterated in the following way:

A: **-þamimultm-**
 1 5 10

B: **þotþopuātņiþonutanfņoi**
 12 15 20 23

Plate 2 can be transliterated as follows:

A: **þotþopuātņiþonutanfņoi**
 1 5 10

In the following, I proceed from my own numbering of the runes. As noted above, Mel’nikova (1987:166) considers that “[t]he carvings on amulet II are less careful than on amulet I — one of the branches of rune 8 is missing, and

⁴⁰⁴ i.e. ‘в опасную землю/в опасной земле’ or ‘во время морского путешествия’

the left loop of rune 1 is cut twice. All this suggests that amulet II is a copy of amulet I made by a less experienced carver.” I however consider that the carvings on plate 2 are actually more vigorous than on plate 1, which thus indicates a practised carver well aware of which signs should be made. Rune 1 does have an extra bow on plate 2, but in my opinion this indicates the carver’s awareness that the bows of the **þ**-rune could be doubled rather than a careless copying of plate 1. It is therefore improbable that the carver was less experienced. Rune 8 on plate 2 is not missing the lower part of the mainstave, as Mel’nikova claims (see my comments in the catalogue as well as figure 11.3). Had this been the case, a copying error could certainly have been suspected in this runic sign, but the rune is actually shaped identically on the two plates. Two runes on plate 2 are, moreover, carved with fewer lines (3 and 12, see table 1 in the catalogue), which also indicates that the carver of plate 2 was competent and experienced. Both inscriptions are carved with a leftwards lean, which might signify that they are the work of the same hand.

Plate 2 thus has the same inscription as the reverse of plate 1 and constitutes a kind of key to that inscription. I would like to emphasise here that I am not suggesting that it was intended as a key but that it can be used as such as a result of the same method being employed to encrypt the matching texts, with differences occurring between individual runes in the different versions. These differences are also presented in the catalogue in table 1 (‘Tablå 1’), and they permit us to clarify the reading of runes 13 and 15 on plate 1.

The obverse of plate 1 contains various runes which could belong to the older rune-row. While rune 1 could thus be **ǣ**, as Mel’nikova suggests, the possibility remains that it could constitute a mark of introduction: the rune does not reach to the lower edge, unlike the mainstaves of the other runes in this row. A further reason that the reading **ǣ** is suspect is that we have no certain attestations of the rune **ǣ** in younger runic inscriptions (see section 2.1). Rune 2 could be read as **w**, but an alternative reading is **þ** (cf. my analysis of the shape of the **þ**-rune in Viking-Age runic inscriptions in the catalogue, tables (‘tablåer’) 4–7). It is again difficult to believe that the rune represents an older rune here since we similarly have no certain attestations of the **w**-rune in younger runic inscriptions. Runes 6 and 10 can also be read as older **m**-runes in balanced form. Rune 3 has an unusual shape; the **ǣ**-runes on the Rök stone (Ög 136) have a similar shape in the part of the inscription which is carved with older runes (see Figure 5). On the reverse of plate 1 is a further rune which is strongly reminiscent of those on the Rök stone, namely rune 6. In the same section of the inscription on the Rök stone is an **i**-rune which is wrapped in a *s*-shape. The corresponding rune on our plate has two such *s*-shapes which enclose the mainstave of the rune. Mel’nikova reads an uncertain bind-rune **ṣk** here, but I consider that its reading is more likely to be **i**. These two unusual runes, which have striking similarities with the older runes on the Rök stone, suggest that the older runes on the Gorodišče plates should not be understood as they usually are, but as elements in a method of encryption. The Gorodišče plates may contain the

same code, or a similar one, with older runes as the Rök stone. This would explain the occurrence of older runes in as late a period as c. 800–950. If Gorodišče plate 1 contains older runes of the same kind as those on the Rök stone, this means that the runes do not necessarily represent the sound values they had in the older rune-row; instead, **g** can, for example, stand for /k/ and **w** for /u/.

Mel'nikova characterises runes 4 and 10 on the obverse and 12 and 14 on the reverse as mirror runes. I agree with her that these runes may be mirrored (or balanced, as I prefer to call them), but believe that it is preferable to read rune 14 on the reverse as **fu** rather than **r** (see my comments in the catalogue). I also identify rune 6 on the obverse as a balanced rune. It is also quite possible that runes 12, 13, 14, (15), 19, 21 and 22 on the reverse are balanced runes. Rune 12 may be a bind-rune **top** or **lop**, and rune 13 can be read as **fo** with a short-twig rune **t** in balanced form. Rune 19 could be read as **nu**. Rune 21 might be **fn**. Rune 22 may be **o** in its balanced long-branch variant **†** or **b** in its balanced short-twig variant **‡**. It is thus possible that six or seven runes on the reverse are balanced.

Runes with non-graphematic branches are identified by Mel'nikova in all of the runes on the reverse of plate 1 with the exception of 14, 18 and 23. The evidence is not however compelling enough in my opinion to allow us to conclude that the runes on the Gorodišče plates were encrypted in this way. As I show in the catalogue, the majority of these runes, namely runes 12, 13, 14, 19 and 21, can be regarded as bind-runes in balanced form. Runes 16, 18 and 20 may be viewed as normal bind-runes: rune 16 may be read as **fn**, rune 18 as **fo** and rune 20 as **fan**. Rune 15 may be read as an older **a**, a younger **h** or perhaps more likely as a balanced form of a long-branch **a**-rune. As regards enhanced runes, I find it difficult to believe that they occur in this inscription, apart from rune 1 on plate 2 (a **p**-rune with a doubled bow).

Rune 11 on the obverse of plate 1 (rune 12 in her transliteration) is understood by Mel'nikova (2001:183) as a coordinate rune: she proposes a reading of **t**. This reading, as noted above, appears impossible; the idea itself may however be correct. As the inscription on side B concludes with a coordinate rune, the inscription on the obverse may also do so. How this should be read is unclear, however. The rune consists of two components: a mainstave and three zigzag lines. It may thus represent 1/3 **m**.

It is therefore my opinion that the Gorodišče plates are encrypted with balanced runes, bind-runes and possibly with older runes of the same type as those on the Rök stone and one or two coordinate runes. I am strongly inclined to dismiss the possibility of runes with non-graphematic branches in this inscription (despite the occurrence of this type of encryption on the Kvinneby plate). The Gorodišče plates thus find their closest parallels in the Ladoga plate and the Hovgård plate, which also have balanced runes, older runes and bind-runes in balanced form. I offer no interpretation of this inscription.

7.2.2 The Ladoga plate (RU Melnikova2001;196)

7.2.2.1 Find circumstances and condition of the plate

Archaeological excavations took place in August of 1975 at Varjažskaja ulica ('Varangian Street') in the northern part of the northwest Russian city of Staraja Ladoga ('Old Ladoga', the Viking city of Aldeigjuborg). The excavations, which were led by V. P. Petrenko, uncovered many objects, including a copper plate with runes (Figure 65), in the ruins of a large building which has been dated to the period from the middle of the ninth century to the end of the tenth century. This was centrally located in relation to the other buildings of the period and itself constituted a kind of settlement hub (Petrenko 1985:91 f., 105–109). It was razed at the end of the tenth century before being burnt. The building may have been used for cultic practices (Petrenko 1985:111 f.) or trade (Kirpičnikov 1985:17). In its ruins were found human and animal sculptures, entire and fragmentary animal skulls as well as many fragments of wooden bowls. Not far away, two Samanid dirhams were found in the same soil stratum as the plate. These were minted in the years 944/945 and 950 respectively. The runic plate has therefore been dated to the tenth century, although it could actually be older. It is now kept in the museum in Staraja Ladoga with the inventory number CAE-75. JIII-1/1303.

The plate is made of copper. On its right short side is a folded, tapering piece of metal which functioned as a bail, i.e. an attachment for hanging. The bail however is made of bronze and Mel'nikova (2001:189) regards it as the result of a repair. This repair was poorly executed, and some of the runes on the right short side of the plate are partly concealed by the attachment. I however suspect that there was no earlier bail but rather that the bronze attachment was a kind of innovation, perhaps the work of a smith who was ignorant of how runic plates usually looked. It is notable that in our entire corpus we find no other runic plate with a comparable bail. There are however some examples of runic plates of similar size and shape (e.g. Solberga plates 4 and 5). We also have several runic plates which have a hole with a metal wire which forms a suspension loop. It can be loosely hypothesised that the plate's hole or wire broke and that a possible smith of non-Scandinavian origin in ninth or tenth-century Ladoga was given the task of repairing it. An examination by X-ray would possibly support or discount this hypothesis, as it could show whether an original hole existed behind the attachment, but I was unable to have such an examination carried out.

The length of the plate is 48 mm. The width of the left short side is 18 mm and of the right short side before the attachment 14.2 mm. The thickness is c. 0.5 mm. Although preserved in its entirety, the plate has traces of heavy corrosion and weathering pits. It is here referred to as the Ladoga plate, rather than the Staraja Ladoga plate, for the sake of simplicity. Ladoga was also the Russian name of the city until 1704.

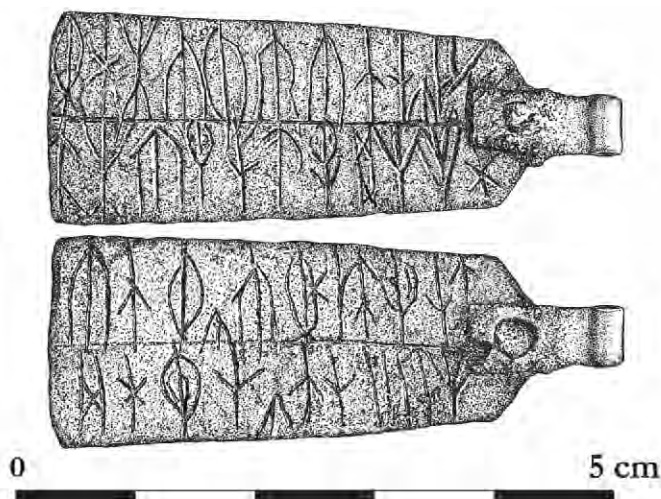


Figure 65. The Ladoga plate. © Sofia Pereswetoff-Morath: Drawing by Ksenia Dubrovina, based on examinations, sketches and photographs by the author.

7.2.2.2 Earlier readings and interpretations

Jurij Kuz'menko was the first to attempt an analysis of the inscription. His initial attempt at reading was presented in two short publications (Petrenko & Kuz'menko 1977; 1979), and thereafter continued with attempts at interpretation in a further two publications (1995; 1997a). His final (1997b:197) full interpretation of the inscription is considered below. Kuz'menko provides alternative readings of his transliteration in brackets; he normalises the inscription into Old Icelandic and translates it into German:

A: $\widehat{\text{p}}\text{uramuprunar}\text{a-}\text{¶}$ (g, t, l, n) muwapwamkfa
 B: $\text{unprupinpat}\text{¶}$ ðaparnakifak

*Þórr á móðrúnar (áss)? má váðvá mik(ki) fá.
 Unnr (ann) Óðinn þat dáð er Naggi fékk.*

‘Thor has runes of courage, (the Áss??). May the gigantic harm not catch me. Odin grants the deed (the courage), which Naggi got.’⁴⁰⁵

Elena Mel'nikova (1994:231 f. and 2001:189–200) has made two attempts to decipher the inscription. She is the first to make the observation, in her first article (1994:232), that the inscription may be encrypted with balanced runes. The suggested reading contains only four lexemes, which she leaves without explicit interpretation: **runar** (the only word in the inscription which has hitherto achieved general acceptance), as well as **unpr**, **par** and **haki**. An attempted

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Thor hat Mutrunen, (der Ase??). Fange nicht mich das Riesenverderben. Odin gönnt die Tat (den Mut), die Naggi erhalten hat.’

interpretation of these is offered by Birkmann (1995:272 f.), including the suggestion of taking **unþr** as Old Icelandic *undr* ‘(something) strange, (something) wonderful, a wonder’ or as *unnr* < *undr* ‘wave’.

Mel’nikova’s second article suggests a full interpretation (2001:196, 200). She also provides alternative readings in brackets and normalises into Old Icelandic;⁴⁰⁶ she translates into Russian which I translate into English:

A: þamuprunaris ¶ ǫm̥uw(þ)alw(þ)m̥kfa

B: unþruþiǫw(þ)at ¶ һаѡаռnakifak

Þá móðrúnar es á móðǫld m(aðr) <kfa> unþr úþjóð at haðar <nakifak>

[Я (или он)] получил гневные руны, которые в гневные времена (человек)... Унн (Один, или: меч) нежить⁴⁰⁷ после битв ...

‘[I, (or he)] got runes of anger, which in times of anger (a person) ...

Unn (Odin, or: sword) demons after battles ...’

One immediately observes that the interpretations diverge markedly at several points. In fact the only features in common are that Odin is named in both suggested interpretations, and that the runic sequence **muþrunar** is interpreted by both scholars as *móðrúnar*, variously understood as ‘runes of courage’ or ‘runes of anger’.

The interpretations are quoted in McKinnell & al. (2004:64 f.), but the commentary is insufficient and they are summarily dismissed before being properly explained. McKinnell & al. thus use Kuz’menko’s interpretation, or rather its German translation, to translate the first element *váða*- ‘giant’ not as an amplification in meaning but as the noun ‘giant’. ‘Gigantic harm’ is transformed in this way into ‘the spoiler of giants’. They also misunderstand two aspects of Mel’nikova’s interpretation (2004:64 f.): they claim that the interpretation “takes the plural *rúnar* as the subject of the singular verb *es*”, which is false. Mel’nikova does not interpret the word *es* as the verb *vera* in 3 pers. sg. pres., but as the relative pronoun ‘which’. McKinnell & al. have further misunderstood the first word of her interpretation, namely *þá* in row 1 of side A, which they seem to understand as the demonstrative pronoun *sá*. It is unclear to me how they can then explain the form *þá*, which is m. acc. pl. or f. acc. sg., when they translate Mel’nikova’s first line as ‘These are grief-runes’.

In the following I therefore wish to discuss the contributions to interpretation by Kuz’menko and Mel’nikova in depth; a great deal of work is required to interpret cryptic inscriptions such as this one, and serious attempts to decipher these merit a detailed discussion. I also believe that independent understanding of difficult inscriptions is enhanced by the careful analysis of previous interpre-

⁴⁰⁶ Mel’nikova uses *R* in her normalisation into Old Icelandic.

⁴⁰⁷ Instead of the extremely unusual word нежить *nežit’*, her running text (p. 200) translates with the better attested нежить *nežit’*, a collective word for creatures without body and soul in human form (but not ghosts).

tations, as one then acquires a better perspective on the methods of interpretation used and the results achieved.

In her critical analysis of Kuz'menko's interpretation, Mel'nikova considers only his early attempts at interpretation (Kuz'menko 1997a). She does refer to his latest proposal (Kuz'menko 1997b), but offers no comment and thereby takes no position on his newer reading and suggested interpretation.⁴⁰⁸ I intend to do this in the following.

Line 1 begins in Kuz'menko's latest reading with the bind-rune **þur**, which he interprets as the theonym *Þórr*. The reading of this bind-rune is uncertain (see my comments in the catalogue, no 12), although I discuss below the possibility of this interpretation of the runic sequence.

Mel'nikova reads a runic sequence **þa** in the beginning of the first line, which she interprets as *þá* – 1 or 3 pers. sg. pret. of the OIcel. verb *þiggja* 'get, come into possession of something which is desired or given' (Fritzner).⁴⁰⁹ This interpretation can be accepted (as it is by me below) with few reservations, although the reading on which it is built is somewhat uncertain. Mel'nikova does not regard the first rune as a bind-rune, although her drawing itself shows a downward-pointing branch to the right of the mainstave of the **þ**-rune (see the catalogue).

The theonym *Þórr* is attested five times in the form **þur** (Ög 136, Vg 150, DR 110, DR 209, E DR419), and twice in the form **þor** (Öl SAS1989;43, N B380). The name is further attested in the form of a bind-rune **þur** on a runestone from Sønder Kirkeby (DR 220). All eight attestations have the rune **r** rather than **ᚱ** as their final consonant, however. Kuz'menko himself draws attention to this difficulty but considers that the use of the **ᚱ**-rune can be explained either by coalescence of the phonemes /r/ and /ᚱ/ or by non-coalescence.

If a case of the former, the result could be written as **r** or **ᚱ**. Kuz'menko (1997b:196) uses as examples the forms **mopir** and **mopir**, claiming that they "date from the same time";⁴¹⁰ he seems here to be stating that the examples were contemporaneous with each other rather than with the Ladoga plate. The coalescence in this example is however a phonetic phenomenon occasioned by the preceding /i/-sound in a weak syllable (cf. Larsson 2002:75–77); it thus does not constitute a parallel to **þur** on the Ladoga plate.

It is generally accepted that the convergence of /r/ and /ᚱ/ occurred later in East Scandinavian than in West Scandinavian, and earliest after dental and alveolar consonants, next after the remaining consonants, and finally after vowels (Larsson 2002:33). The Ladoga inscription can cautiously be supposed to belong to easternmost Norse, and one would then expect that such runic

⁴⁰⁸ It might therefore seem somewhat surprising that Mel'nikova's reading of the most uncertain runes at the end of row 2 on side B (**kifak**) completely coincides with Kuz'menko's newer reading.

⁴⁰⁹ 'faa, komme i besiddelse af noget som begjæres, gives'

⁴¹⁰ "aus derselben Zeit stammen"

alternations would occur quite late. Patrik Larsson (ibid.) summarises Adolf Noreen's observations that, as concerns Sweden, "the yew-rune remains [after non-dental consonants] until c. 1050, when the riding-rune starts to push in here as well, but the two continue to alternate for a while. The yew-rune is generally preserved after vowels until c. 1100, perhaps right up until 1200 or somewhat later, but even before 1100 the two runes start to be confused."⁴¹¹ Coin finds show that the plate was buried in the mid-tenth century at the earliest, while the destruction of the building at the end of the century should provide a *terminus ante quem*. The use of older runes (**ᛗ**, **ᛁ** and **ᛚ**) in its inscription nevertheless indicates that the plate could be older. The suggestion of convergence thus does not match the dating of the inscription. We should not however summarily disregard the possibility of the plate's carver coming to Aldeigjuborg from West Scandinavia, where convergence seems to have occurred as early as c. 900. Spurkland (2001:117 f.), however, writes that "in Norwegian territory, the distinction between the two r-sounds disappeared quite quickly, which means that /r/ converged with normal /r/. [- - -] In all the end syllables it is ᚱᚱ which is used for /r/."⁴¹² One can thus hardly expect that the runes would be confused, since the differences in pronunciation disappeared so early and the *reið*-rune thereafter universally prevailed in final position. Further complicating the situation is the fact that the runic sequence **unþr** occurs in the inscription, which indicates that the phoneme /r/ had not yet converged with /r/ after dental consonants. This agrees well with the early dating of the plate but less well with Kuz'menko's suggestion: if convergence had not yet occurred after dental consonants, it ought not to have occurred after vowels either (as also shown by the runic sequence **runar**). One should not thus expect any confusion between the runes **ᚱ** and **ᚱ**.

If, on the other hand, the inscription evidences non-convergence, then according to Kuz'menko the final position of **ᚱ** in the word **þur** represents /r:/. If I have correctly understood, the phoneme resulting from the assimilation of /rr/ (Kuz'menko reconstructs /*þo:rr*/ > /*þo:rr*/) still differs qualitatively from the short /r/-phoneme. As a parallel is adduced the qualitative difference between short and long /l/ and /n/ respectively in Old Icelandic, which arose through the respective assimilation of /lr/ and /nr/. (The suggestion of /lr/ and /nr/-assimilation is discussed with a Swedish summary in Kuz'menko 1978: 94–100.) The proposition assumes a phoneme /r:/ resulting from the assimilation /rr/, which differed in quality from /r/ and could be represented by the **ᚱ**-rune. In order to discover what kind of sound such an assimilation of /rr/ might produce, Patrik Larsson (2002:36–40) investigated all the nominative

⁴¹¹ "står yrrunan kvar [efter icke-dentala konsonanter] till omkring 1050, då redrunan börjar tränga in även här, men de två växlar framgent under en tid. Efter vokaler är yrrunan i allmänhet bevarad till omkring år 1100, kanske t.o.m. till 1200 eller något senare, men redan före 1100 börjar de båda runorna förväxlas."

⁴¹² "på norsk område opphørte nok så raskt forskjellen mellom de to r-lydene, det betyr at /r/ falt sammen med vanlig /r/. [- - -] I alle endestavelsene er det ᚱᚱ som blir brukt for /r/."

anthroponyms ending in *-arr*. The results show that of the total of 86 attestations found in SRD in 2001, 78 were carved with **r** and eight with **ṛ**. Larsson examines in detail the reliability of these eight attestations (as well as a further two with names in the accusative), and his results (pp. 38–40) show that no firm conclusions that /rr/ developed into /r:/ can be drawn from the two certain attestations (Ög 14 and Ög 201⁴¹³). Runic support for the hypothesis is thus too weak to be accepted.

Kuz'menko convincingly interprets the runic sequence **amuprunar** as the two words *á móðrúnar* 'has runes of courage'. The runSw. verb *æiga* 'own; have to wife' occurs in different forms on many Swedish runestones (Peterson 2006:92). The compound *móðrúnar* can also be supported with parallels (see section 7.2.2.4).

The final word in Kuz'menko's interpretation of line 1 on side A consists of the runic sequence **as**. The reading is very uncertain, but the interpretation of *áss* for the sequence **as** is not impossible. One would however expect an **o**-rune in this word given the early date of the plate.

Line 2 begins with a rune which Kuz'menko does not include in his interpretation, instead representing it with a question mark. He suggests several different reading alternatives, including an *os*-rune or an enhanced **t**-rune, but gives no preference to any of these, instead beginning his interpretation with the following rune.

The subsequent runic sequence **mu** is interpreted by Kuz'menko as pres. ind. *mā* of an OSw. verb *mogha* (also *magha*, *mugha*) 'be strong, have strength or power, be able to; may'⁴¹⁴ (Söderwall). He observes that the word *mā* is found in two inscriptions (U 323, Vs 15); it is however represented there as **mo**. Cases can be found of an *os*-rune marking a nasal vowel after a nasal consonant, and among these Williams (1990:64, fn. 38) discusses the attestation **mo** on U 323 and Vs 15. We should thus be permitted to consider **mo** on Vs 15 and U 323 as good parallels to Kuz'menko's suggestion, although we lack an explanation of why the vowel /a:/ in this word is apparently represented by the **u**-rune.

The next word which Kuz'menko discerns in line 2 is interpreted as *váðvá* – a compound of two Old Icelandic words: *váði* m. 'harm, accident, damage' and *vá* f. 'harm, accident, danger' (Fritzner).⁴¹⁵ According to Kuz'menko, the word *váði* often occurs as a first element in Old Icelandic compounds in the forms *váða*- or *vað*-, and he provides the following examples: *váðahark* n. 'very strong noise', *váðakuldi* m. 'harmful cold or frost'⁴¹⁶ and *váðvænn* adj. 'dangerous, arousing fear of something'.⁴¹⁷ A further example, *váðamaðr* m. 'harm-

⁴¹³ There is in fact only one certain attestation, as Ög 201 must be discounted (see Källström 2005:13).

⁴¹⁴ 'vara stark, hafva styrka eller makt, förmå; må'

⁴¹⁵ *váði* m. 'skade, ulykke, vaade'; *vá* f. 'skade, ulykke, fare' (Fritzner)

⁴¹⁶ Kuz'menko translates 'sehr starke Kälte'.

⁴¹⁷ The final two compounds, *váðvænn* and *váðveifliga*, presumably do not evidence the first element *váði*- however but rather *vá*-; the *ð* here is secondary.

ful person' is found in *Lexicon Poeticum*. According to Kuz'menko, the meaning of the word *vá* is intensified by the first element *váða-*, and the compound *váðvá* could mean 'Riesenverderben', i.e. 'gigantic harm'. I am however dubious that the first element *váða-* could in fact be used as an intensifier. The examples found in Fritzner's dictionary and in *Lexicon Poeticum* appear instead to show that the first element was used with its actual meaning of 'harm, harmful'. The compound could then be translated as 'harmful accident' or 'harmful danger', but even if the translation 'dangerous danger' is avoided, the expression seems unmistakably tautological. This impression is augmented by the fact that the word *váði* probably derives from *vá* (Magnússon 1989:1149); Magnússon (ibid.) observes that the OIcel. word *vá* is of disputed origin, although it is obviously related to OEng. *wāwa*, *wéa* and OSax. *wē*. The word is probably attested in two runic inscriptions: on the Ulvsunda plate, which has an archaeological dating to the ninth century, and the Järfälla plate, which has been dated to around 1000 but might be older. It is thus not inconceivable that it could occur on the Ladoga plate.

Kuz'menko's reading further identifies the runic sequence **mkfa**, which is given the interpretation *mik(ki) fá* 'not catch me'. **mk** is interpreted as the pronoun *mik* in 1 pers. acc. with an *i*-rune concealed in the mainstave of the **k**-rune. The runic sequence (i)**k** should thus be double-read, the second time with the hidden *i*-rune after the **k**-rune – **k(i)**. Kuz'menko (1997b:192) further regards the two dots which he discerns between the left branch and mainstave of the **k**-rune as designating this double-reading. The pronoun *mik* in the form **mik** is attested on a runestone from Kärnbo Old Church (Sö 176), and the negative marker *ækki* in the form **iki** occurs on Sö 174, U 69, U 225 and Vs 24. It is furthermore well-established that the Old Icelandic particle *-gi/ki* could be attached to nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs; the word *mikki* is not therefore remarkable. One can on the other hand question the double-reading of two runes (of which one rune, *i*, is not even visible) which the reading of this word requires. The runic sequence **fa** can easily be accepted as the infinitive of *fā*, a verb which occurs a further four times on a runestone from Hillersjö (U 29) in 3 pers. sg. pret. (*fikk*) and twice in 3 pers. pl. pret. (*fingu*).

Mel'nikova's interpretation of line 2 on side A is radically different from that of Kuz'menko. She reads runes 16 and 19 as **p** rather than **w**. She also takes a different view of rune 18, which she identifies as **l**. The line thus begins with the runic sequence **omūpalp**, which is given the interpretation *á móðqld* 'in times of anger'. The compound *móðqld* comprises the first element *móð* 'anger' and the second element *qld* f. 'people, age' (Fritzner). Compounds with this second element with the meaning of 'time, age' do occur in Old Icelandic, e.g. in *Völuspá* (H) 37. *Lexicon Poeticum* adds compounds such as *rómqld*, *styrjqld*, *skær(u)qld* 'unrest, time of unrest, time of battle(s)' and *hreggqld* 'time of storm(s)'. *Móðqld* with the meaning 'time of anger' would fit well into this company, and Mel'nikova's compound would also accord with the previous line through its repetition of the first element *móð-*. The difficulty is that

we lack fully reliable examples of the rune **p** representing /d/ in Viking-Age runic material. The interpretation must therefore be considered improbable.

In the runic sequence **mkfa**, Mel'nikova interprets the rune **m** as a runic ideograph for the OIcel. word *maðr* 'person', comparing (2001:195) this with the **D**-rune⁴¹⁸ of the Ingelstad stone (Ög 43, see also section 2.1). She leaves the sequence **kfa** uninterpreted. While it is not impossible to regard the rune **m** as an ideograph, it is preferable to avoid such solutions. The best-known and clearest example of the use of runic ideographs occurs in the Proto-Norse inscription on a stone from Stentofte, Blekinge (DR 357). A further stone from Gummarp, also in Blekinge (DR 358 †), which was destroyed in a fire in Copenhagen in 1728, had a Proto-Norse inscription which is translated as 'Hadu-wolf placed three staves fff'. These (runic) staves have been interpreted as the runic ideographs *f[ehu]* 'cattle, property, wealth'⁴¹⁹ (KJ 1966:208). Here it is the context itself which reveals the meaning of the runes. It is not however as self-evident on the Ladoga plate that the word 'time of anger' should follow the runic ideograph **m**. The interpretation is also complicated by the runic sequence **kfa** remaining unexplained.

Line 1 of side B begins with the runic sequence **unþr**. Kuz'menko offers six different suggestions for interpretation: 1) the etymologically unclear OIcel. theonym *Unnr* m., a *heiti* for Odin; 2) the OIcel. appellative **unaðr* m. < *unað* n. 'friend'; this however requires that the second rune in the line is read as the bind-rune **na**, which is impossible; 3) the OIcel. appellative *unnr*, *uðr* f. 'wave, billow' or a feminine name derived from this, *Unnr/Uðr*; 4) the OIcel. appellative *unnr* m. 'sword'; 5) the OSw. verb *unna* 'like, love, give, grant, bestow' in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind., *unner*, *unnar*; 6) the OIcel. verb *vinna* 'work, win' in 3 pers. sg. pres., *vinnr*, *viðr*. Kuz'menko regards the form **unþr** as a transitional form or a contamination of *unnr* (*vinnr*) and *uðr* (*viðr*). The suggestion preferred by him is that **unþr** is 3 pers. sg. pres. of the verb *unna*: *unner* 'grants'.

Suggestions 1 and 3–6 are problematic as we lack attestations of the mid-stage *-nðr*. There is however one possible example of the verb *vinna* 'work, win' in the transitional form **uiþr** *viðr* on the Ribe skull (DR EM85:151B; see Grønvik 1999a:110 f.; see also Larsson 2002:47 f.). It may even represent a kind of optional transitional stage: Larsson (2002:47) provides examples of optional transitional forms where the same person can be called **þurun** *Þörunn(r)* in U 859 and **þurupr** *Þöruðr* in U 860, despite both stones being the work of the same carver, Åsmund Kåresson. We also have an interesting mediaeval attestation of the name *Finnr* being carved as **finþr** (N B599).

The next runic sequence **upin** is interpreted by Kuz'menko as the theonym Óðinn. The name *Óðinn* occurs in at least three runic inscriptions: on a fibula from Nordendorf, Bavaria, in the form **wodan** (KJ 151, sixth century), on the

⁴¹⁸ She does however erroneously refer to this rockface as an amulet (2001:195).

⁴¹⁹ 'Vieh, Besitz, Reichtum'

Ribe skull in the form **uþin** (DR EM85;151B, eighth century) and on a runic stick from Bergen in the form **oþen** (N B380, second half of the twelfth century). There is moreover a suggestion that Odin on the Ribe skull is also named **ulfur Ulf** and **hutiur Hō-Tyr** (MacLeod & Mees 2006:27). Kuz'menko's interpretation would thus be acceptable if the reading were not so uncertain: the final rune in **uþin** should be read as **o** rather than **n**.

Line 2 is interpreted by Kuz'menko as 'that deed which Naggi got'. In the previous line, as mentioned, he wants to interpret **unþa** as the verb *unna* in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. It is then problematic to have *þat dād* 'that deed' in the accusative, since the verb *unna* requires the dative case. The noun *dād* is moreover always feminine in Old West Scandinavian, making it incompatible with dem. pron. *þat n*. The anthroponym *Naggi* would also require support as it is otherwise unknown.

Mel'nikova prefers Kuz'menko's initial suggestion for the runic sequence **unþa**, i.e. *Unnr/Uðr*, a *heiti* for Odin. The name *Uðr* occurs among the 54 names for Odin in *Grímnismál* (verses 46–50, 54). No other *heiti* for the theonym Odin is known to be attested in runic inscriptions. Since in Mel'nikova's interpretation the theonymic *Unnr* lacks any clear connection with the previous or following phrase, she proposes an alternative interpretation of the runic sequence **unþa**, namely Olcel. *unnr* m. 'sword'. The appellative *unnr* occurs in skaldic poetry (*Lexicon Poeticum*) and should therefore be feasible in a runic inscription of this type.

The next word in Mel'nikova's interpretation is Olcel. *úþjóð* f., which she translates as нежить 'sprites, bogeys' (see also fn. 407). Fritzner's translation of this lexeme is 'bad folk, crowd of evil people'.⁴²⁰ The prefix *ú-* usually represents a negation or opposite. In *Lexicon Poeticum*, the word *óþjóð* is glossed with almost the same expression as in Fritzner: 'evil people, evil men, pack, robbers'.⁴²¹ The prefix *úlo* in *úþjóð* thus in Old Icelandic designates a negation only of particular qualities (i.e. bad people) and not an oppositional relationship (i.e. non-people). The definition of the word *úþjóð* in Modern Icelandic is 'evil people, rabble, devils' (Cleasby & Vigfusson). The meaning 'devils' does not occupy the first place here and should rather be considered as secondary. Since there is no trace of it in attestations of Old Icelandic, it is presumably a later addition. I therefore consider Mel'nikova's translation 'sprites, bogeys' as less probable.

The first half of line 2 on side B is interpreted by Mel'nikova as *at haðar* 'after battles', a fully plausible interpretation. She offers no suggestions for interpreting the final sequence, **nakifaḱ**.

It can briefly be stated that the strengths of Kuz'menko's interpretation consist primarily of his compound *móðrúnar*, which suggests that the inscription is actually interpretable, as well as his careful discussion of different interpre-

⁴²⁰ 'slet folk, skare af slemme mennesker'

⁴²¹ 'slet folk, slette mænd, pak, røvere'

tations and meanings of individual words. Thanks to Mel'nikova, the reading of the inscription has been clarified and new suggestions offered for the interpretation of certain runic sequences, as exemplified by **þa** and **hapaŕ**.

7.2.2.3 New transliteration

I have dedicated a great deal of attention to the reading of this inscription, as any interpretation is completely dependent thereupon. I investigated the plate with the help of a stereomicroscope on five occasions (January 2009, April 2010, November 2010, January 2011 and March 2013). I may not have produced a better interpretation of the Ladoga plate but I hope in any case to have provided a more secure reading. My transliteration follows below and all comments and photographs can be found in the catalogue. I have also made a phonographemic analysis of the runes on the plate and this is reproduced as Appendix 1 in the catalogue.

A: **þramuþrunars | omuþalþamkfa**

B: **unþruþaiopaþ | hapaŕnaŕ--k**

The runes of the Ladoga plate are encrypted: they have what I call a balanced form (see section 2.6). The plate has been dated on stratigraphic grounds to later than the mid-tenth century, but runologically it can be dated to c. 800–950. The orthography on the plate can thus be compared with that found on early Viking-Age runestones.

The older runes **h**, **a** and **m** are found in younger runic inscriptions in both Denmark and Sweden (see section 2.1). Two allographs of /a/, ***** and **†**, occur both in Sweden and Denmark; they are found on the Sparlösa stone (Vg 119): **a** (**†**) and **a** (*****). The Sparlösa stone also has two allographs of /m/ – an older **m** and a short-twig rune **m**. The two allographs of /a/ are also found on the Flemløse stone on Funen (DR 192) and the Snoldelev stone on Zealand (DR 248). The Snoldelev stone also has an older **h**-rune, like the Ladoga plate. There are also two less certain attestations: one on the lost Tune stone on Zealand (DR 249 **†**) and the other on the Sønderby stone on Funen (DR 191), where it is uncertain whether ***** represents **a** or **h**.

I have normalised the inscription into runic Swedish (rather than runic Danish or Old Icelandic) because we have no early runic plates from Denmark and no plates at all from Norway or Iceland. My phonographemic analysis of the runes of the Ladoga plate (Appendix 1 in the catalogue) is therefore also based on the runic Swedish phonemic system.

Line 1 on side A begins with **þ**, whose mainstave may also have the branches of a **r**-rune. Despite examining the plate five times, I cannot be certain whether the first rune really constitutes a bind-rune. Side B also has an uncertain bind-rune **þa**, which despite extensive investigation I am not completely certain of. I have therefore chosen to provide alternative transliterations of these lines. Line 1 can thus also be transliterated as **þamuþrunars**, and line 3 as

unþrupiopaṭ. The only certain bind-rune in the inscription is rune 18 (ᚦ). This can be read in four different ways: as **ap**, as **pa**, or doubled as **apa** or **pap**. Line 4 concludes with four (or possibly five) runes which are now very difficult to read because of the corrosion of the metal. Two of these can be somewhat hesitantly identified as **m** and **k**. I choose not to attempt to identify the other two runes: the metal is full of weathering pits and any runes at all can potentially be imagined here.

7.2.2.4 Lexemes which may occur on the Ladoga plate

I have attempted several times to give a full interpretation of the runes on the Ladoga plate but have been forced to concede that the results have not been convincing. I now at this later stage refrain from offering a full interpretation, instead restricting myself to the discussion of individual words which may occur in the inscription. From one perspective this has not been entirely successful, as the interpreted runic sequences tend during this process to combine into some sense of meaning. Lena Peterson (1997:143, 146) describes how this can occur, and I completely agree with her:

But it is a fact – and I speak from my own experience – that when one has wrestled with a difficult inscription for a long time, the text can take over the interpreter. It imprints itself on the brain and one cannot get rid of it until one has achieved a “full interpretation”. [- - -] The person interpreting must be aware of the risk of the text taking hold of him or her to the degree that he/she is overcome by the desire – the compulsion – to come up with a “full interpretation”. But it is not permissible to let oneself be carried away by this desire if the interpreter goes beyond what can be scientifically established.⁴²²

While I have therefore allowed the lexemes to syntactically combine into a meaning of some kind, I focus solely on justifying the suggested interpretations of individual runic sequences in a scholarly manner.

7.2.2.4.1 Side A

Line 1 begins with the runic sequence **pa** or **pra**; this is followed by the sequence **muþrunars** which probably contains the compound *mōðrūnar*, which will be discussed later. The **s**-rune at the end of the line is most likely connected with line 2. If we read the initial runic sequence as **pa**, we can join Mel’nikova in seeing a correspondence to the Old Icelandic verb *þiggja* ‘get, receive, come into possession of something desirable’.⁴²³ The OWS verb *þiggja* is attested on a runic stick from Bergen (N B380) in the expression *Þórr þik þiggi* ‘May Thor

⁴²² “Men det är nu så – och jag talar av egen erfarenhet – att när man en längre tid har brottats med en svår inskrift, så kan texten ta herraväldet över tolkaren. Den sätter sig på hjärnan och man blir inte kvitt den förrän man har fått en ’helhetstolkning’ [- - -] Tolkaren måste vara medveten om risken att texten kan gripa tag i honom/henne så till den grad att han/hon överväldigas av önskan – tvånget – att komma med en ’helhetstolkning’. Men det är förbjudet att låta sig förryckas av denna önskan, om tolkaren går ut över det som vetenskapligt kan slås fast.”

⁴²³ ‘få, ta emot, komme i besiddelse af noget som begjæres’ (*Norrøn ordbok*, Fritzner)

receive you'. The verb on the Ladoga plate is in 1 or 3 pers. sg. pret., *þá*. We thus arrive at the meaning *Þā mōðrūnar* '[I] received runes of anger, mind-runes'.

If we instead choose to read the runic sequence as **þra**, it can be interpreted as a counterpart to the Olcel. verb *þrā* in 2 pers. sg. imp. The word can mean 'desire, yearn, long for'.⁴²⁴ A derivation of the verb is found in the OSw. appellative **þrar** *þrār* f. acc. pl. 'torments' on Sigtuna plate 1. The verb is used either with a genitive object or with constructions using the preposition *efter* (Fritzner and *ONP*).⁴²⁵ One might then regard the runic sequence **muprunar** as gen. sg. and interpret the phrase as 'strive for the rune of anger'.

Line 2 comprises the runic sequence **omupalþamkfa**. It can immediately be noted that the sequence **þamkfa** contains three runic consonants in a row. If we do not wish to presuppose the omission of runic vowels, there is only one solution: to interpret the sequence as *æm*'k 'I am' and *fā* 'receive'. These two verbs should probably be assigned to different sentences.

Let us first investigate **amk**, which may represent the verb *vesa* in 1 pers. sg. pres. ind. with an enclitic pers. pron. *ek*. The designation of the phoneme /æ/ by the **a**-rune in **am** is hardly surprising, as other Viking-Age examples of this can be adduced. On the Forsa ring (Hs 7), the adverb *ægi/ækki* is carved thus: **aki**. There are also many certain examples of the use of the **a**-rune for /e/ or /æ/ in younger runic inscriptions (see Lagman 1990:50–61). According to Old Icelandic and Old Swedish grammars (Noreen 1904:389; 1923:310; Iversen 1973:84), personal pronouns can be enclitically attached to preceding verbs, especially in poetic language. Among Viking-Age examples can be noted the inscription on the Sigtuna box (U Fv1912:8), containing a sentence which has been interpreted by S. B. F. Jansson (1987:133)⁴²⁶ as **fonkawk × o nos au-a Fann**'k *gawk ā nās au[k]a* 'I observed the increase in the corpse's cuckoo'. For further examples of enclitic 'k, see Källström (2010c:57 f.).

The runic sequence **fa** may be 2 pers. sg. imp. *fā* or 1 pers. sg. pres. ind. *fā/fæ*. It may either represent a separate sentence or belong with the following phrase. The Olcel. verb *fā* means 'grab, take', 'reach, come to', 'receive, sustain'⁴²⁷ and is attested in Viking-Age runic spells. On the Sigtuna box (U Fv1912:8), we thus find the verb as 3 pers. sg. pret. *fikk* in the sense 'acquire'.

⁴²⁴ 'trå, stunde, lengte' (*Norrøn ordbok*)

⁴²⁵ I would like to thank Jurij Kuz'menko for noting this in his criticism of one of my earlier suggestions for interpretation of the Ladoga plate (Düwel & Kuz'menko 2013:342).

⁴²⁶ Otto von Friesen's interpretation (1912:12) of this line reads: *fann gawk ā nās au[k]a* 'one observed on the raven, how he increased' or 'one observed on the carrion-cuckoo, how he swelled' ("man märkte på korpen, hur han ökade", "man såg på asgöken, hur han svällde"). The sentence is thus lacking in a subject. It is von Friesen's interpretation which has won general acceptance; Jansson's, however, has the advantage that the sentence shows an enclitic *ek* as the subject, which would explain why the carver, who otherwise consistently uses punctuation marks to show word boundaries in this inscription, chose to join up **fonkawk** instead of dividing it into two words. I therefore prefer this suggestion to that of von Friesen and regard the example as a probable attestation of the enclitic use of *ek*.

⁴²⁷ 'gripe, ta', 'nå, komme til', 'få, komme ut for' (*Norrøn ordbok*)

It is used on the Kvinneby plate in 3 pers. sg. pres. ind. *fǣR* in the expression *fǣ ekki af e-n* ‘to not receive what one wants from someone’: *Vit fǣR ekki af Bofa* ‘Magic (evil) achieves nothing with Bove’.

The runic sequence **omupalþa** should probably include the **s**-rune from the previous line. The **o**-rune presumably represents a nasal sound, which means that it should either designate prep. *ā* or comprise part of the same word as the runes **s** and **m**, e.g. the relative particle **som**. The particle occurs in this very form on DR 217. One can thus presuppose that the vowel /æ/ was nasalised by the following /m/-sound. The nasalisation of vowels preceding **m** is actually attested before the tenth century: Henrik Williams (1990:38) lists three early attestations: **kom** *kam* (N KJ101), **kobr** *kambr* (DR EM85;370A) and **somon** *sa-man* (Ög 136). The suggestion is thus feasible, although in the absence of an interpretation of the whole it cannot be considered certain. The particle could be used in Old Icelandic with the meaning ‘at the time of, then’ (Fritzner).⁴²⁸ Cleasby and Vigfusson provide the following example: *sem hringdi til aptansöngs vildi konungr ganga* ‘when it rang for evensong, the king wanted to go’. This use of the particle as a conjunction seems to be older than its relative function (Cleasby & Vigfusson, *sem*).

A stumbling block for runologists is the runic sequence **upalþ** (or **mupalþa** if we double-read the **m** and **a**-runes). Since there are so many possibilities for reading this sequence, we require a fixed point from which to judge the probability of the different interpretational possibilities. This is provided by the word *mōðrūnar* ‘rune/s of anger’, which delimits the interpretation to one particular semantic field. It thus appears likely that the runic sequence contains either the word *mōð-* ‘anger’ or the word *ōð-/ōðā-* ‘furious’. The difficulty here is finding a semantically convincing word which uses the **l**-rune. I have finally opted for two alternatives: the first is a counterpart to the Old Icelandic word *él* n., which can have the figurative meaning ‘evil time, battle, struggle’.⁴²⁹ The runic sequence (**m**)**upal** may then be interpreted as a compound *mōð-él* n. or *ōð-él* n. ‘angry struggle’, ‘furious battle’. The second alternative is to read **lþa** as **lāþ**, which is entirely possible in view of the form of the bind-rune, and then interpret the runic sequence as a counterpart to Old Icelandic *leið* f. ‘path, road; time; ocean’. The fact that the diphthong /æi/ is designated by the **a**-rune may be a sign that monophthongisation to /e/ has already begun; it is evident in Denmark from the beginning of the tenth century (Bergman 1984:21). This would agree with the dating of the plate. The result of the process of monophthongisation is usually represented with the **i** or later with the **e**-rune, but not infrequently also with the **a**-rune. Thus the dem. pron. *sā(r)* is written **þar** *þair* on DR 6 and 280, and **þara** *þaira* on DR 91. The verb *raisa* is carved as **raspi** *ræispi* on DR 213 and DR 268, the negative particle *æigi* is carved as **aki** on DR 279, and the personal name *Ōfæigr* is carved as **ufah** on

⁴²⁸ ‘paa den tid som, da’

⁴²⁹ ‘vond tid, strid, kamp’ (*Norrøn ordbok*, Fritzner)

DR 138. We also have early attestations of corresponding monophthongisation in Sweden. The Forsa ring (Hs 7), dated by Magnus Källström (2010) to the early tenth century,⁴³⁰ provides some examples of such early monophthongisation, although it is not explicitly discussed in Källström's article. Two of the examples comprise the dem. pron. *sā(r)* in nom. pl. *þæir þar* and the personal name *Ōfæigr ofakra*. The third attestation is the verb *æiga* 'own, have to wife' which in 3 pers. pl. pres. ind. *æigu* is carved as *aku*.

The runes *þa* can however also be interpreted as corresponding to the OIcel. adverb *þá*, which has a multitude of different meanings, 'then, at that time, if so, in that case, so',⁴³¹ and can be used pleonastically before a verb (*Norrøn ordbok*), as is the case in our inscription (*æm'k*).

We arrive in this way at several different possibilities, all of which entail the same difficulty, namely that they require a construction with *æm'k* 'I am'. The phrases 'I am an angry struggle / a furious battle / an angry journey' can be said to fit with the previous phrase, 'Attempt to take the rune of anger', but a syntactic combination is difficult. The sentence *Prā mōðrūnar sum (m)ōð-ēl þā æm'k* or: *Prā mōðrūnar sum (m)ōð-a-læið æm'k*, 'Attempt to take the rune of anger when I am furious (or) at the battle/path/time/journey of anger' does call to mind the god Odin, but in any event leaves me dissatisfied.

7.2.2.4.2 Side B

Line 1 begins with the runic sequence *unþr*, with the yew-rune presumably signifying the end of the word. The form *unþr* is explained by Kuz'menko (1997b:193) as a transitional form in the series *unnr* > *unðr* > *uðr*. This is however not as feasible as his other proposal, namely that it is a compromise form. The suggestion that the form *unðr* could then represent a compromise between the forms *unnr* and *uðr* should nonetheless be received with great caution and I denote it with a question mark.

If we choose to interpret the *unþr* of the inscription as the masculine *unnr*⁴³² 'sword', the word here is nom. sg. The following runic sequence *upi* can then be interpreted as corresponding to the OIcel. adj. *óðr* 'furious, violent' in the weak form in m. nom. sg., *ōði*. *Unnr ōði* can consequently be interpreted as 'furious sword' and thus should presumably be understood literally rather than as a kenning. If the next runic sequence reads *uþa*, this can be interpreted as a word corresponding to OIcel. *úði* m. 'fire' in gen. sg. or to OIcel. *óði* f. 'fury'

⁴³⁰ Källström (2010:230 f.) writes: "A runological examination thus shows that from all evidence the Forsa ring belongs to the early Viking Age. [- -] The runic shapes and linguistic forms of the Forsa ring unanimously date to the Viking Age, not to the century of the Rök stone but rather somewhat later." ("En runologisk granskning visar alltså att Forsaringen av allt att döma tillhör tidig vikingatid. [- -] Forsaringens runformer och språkformer ger en samstämmig datering till vikingatiden, men inte till Rökstenens århundrade utan snarare något senare.")

⁴³¹ 'da, på den tid, i så fall, i det tilfellet, så'

⁴³² The word *unnr* m. 'sword' has the ending *-ar* in gen. sg. (cf. the kennings *írtungur unnar* 'blades' and *unnar Baldr* 'warrior' in *Lexicon Poeticum*). It is therefore most probable that the word is a *u*-stem. Had it been an *i*-stem, *i*-mutation would have resulted in **ynnrr*. The word may be a masc. derivation of the verb **(ga)winnan* > **(ga)wunnuz* (cf. de Vries 1977:666).

in gen. sg. ‘The sword of fire’ or ‘the sword of fury’ can presumably also be understood literally. The rune **i** can then with double-reading of the previous **α**-rune be interpreted as an adverb corresponding to OSw. *æ*, ‘always, forever, constantly, on any occasion, every time’.

The next rune, **o**, can be interpreted as the runSw. prep. *ā*. I contend that this preposition belongs with the runSw. verb *fā* which occurs on the other side of the plate. Fritzner provides examples of the OIcel. verb *fá á* (*e-n*) meaning ‘overpower, obtain such power over someone that he [or she] cannot control himself [or herself] or his[her] mind’:⁴³³ *Opt fá á horskan, er á heimskan ne fá, lostfagrir litir* ‘Fair faces often obtain power over a clever person, while they never entrap a stupid one’. Nygaard (1905:19) translates *fá á e-n* as ‘obtain power over’ and notes (p. 18) that the verb *fá* with the prep. *á* belongs to a group of words which may lack an object if the meaning is clear from the context: “Sometimes the object is omitted if it describes something which is not named, but easily understood from the context.”⁴³⁴ The verb in the construction *fá á* consequently becomes intransitive over time. My interpretation permits a construction both with the object (in the runic sequence *þa*) as well as without. The object can be found in *þā*, which as the dem. pron. *sā(ð)* in f. acc. sg. can only refer back to ‘rune of anger’. I however prefer the alternative without the object which thus leaves undecided whether side A has ‘runes of anger’ or ‘rune of anger’. The runic sequence *þat* can therefore be best interpreted as conj. *þat* ‘to, in order to’.

The phrase ‘Obtain, furious sword, such power to’ or ‘Obtain, sword of fury/fire, such power for ever’ is followed in line 2 by the runic sequence **hāþar**. Mel’nikova interprets this as the OIcel. word *hǫð* f. ‘struggle, battle’. I accept this interpretation but suggest that the word occurs here in nom. pl. *hǫðar*. This word most often occurs in compounds but is found, for example, in Bragi the old’s *Ragnarsdrápa* from the second half of the ninth century (verse 10) as a simplex. It is also found as such in a runic inscription on a sixth-century sandstone whetstone (N KJ50), where it occurs in the dat. sg. form **hāþu**, i.e. **wate hāli hino hornā ʀ hāhā skapi hāþu ligi** ‘May the horn wet this stone. May it damage grass, lie in battle’ (cf. however Grønvik 1996:143–147, who suggests a different interpretation).

The runic sequence **na** can be interpreted as corresponding to the OIcel. verb *ná* in 3 pers. pl. pres. ‘come into possession of, obtain, achieve something’.⁴³⁵ Söderwall augments these meanings with ‘attain, receive’, which is exemplified in a line from the epic Erik’s Chronicle, ‘there one gets more for the sake of God than one receives in other countries for money’.⁴³⁶ In combination with the previous word, the meaning is ‘battles come into possession of’ or ‘battles attain’.

⁴³³ ‘overvælde, faa saadan magt over en, at han ikke kan beherske sig selv eller sit sind’

⁴³⁴ “Stundom udelades som objekt en betegnelse for en gjenstand, der ikke er nævnt, men lettelig skjønnes af sammenhængen.”

⁴³⁵ ‘komme i besiddelse af, faa, opnaa noget’ (Fritzner)

⁴³⁶ *man skal ther mera för gudz skull faa än j androm landom för peninga naa.*

The following word presumably begins with /m/ and ends with /k/. I do not wish to present any real suggestions for interpretation here, but propose only as a cautious working hypothesis for the purpose of filling in the blanks the adverb *miok* ‘much’.

The disadvantage of the phrase *Fā unnr ōði* (*unnr ūða/ōða æ*), *ā þat haðar nā m[iok]k* ‘Obtain, furious sword(?)/ sword of fury(?)/ sword of fire(?), such power that the battles attain (much)’ is no different to the previous one. Although it can be observed that the theme is still obviously anger and battles, the actual meaning of the phrase remains unclear.

7.2.2.4.3 Runes 3–10 **muprunar**

Norrøn ordbok provides the following definitions of the word *móðr* m. ‘1) unrest in the mind, confusion, mental anxiety, grief, anger, rage. 2) mood, mind. 3) courage, boldness.’⁴³⁷ In *Völuspá* (H) verses 22 and 48, the word *móðr* m. is used in the sense of ‘anger’: *Þórr einn þar vá, þrunginn móði* ‘Thor alone struck, full of anger’ and *af móði drepr Miðgarðs véurr* ‘in anger kills the defender of Midgard’. In *The Poetic Edda*, the word is nonetheless also found with the meaning ‘zeal, desire for battle, courage’, e.g. in *Reginismál* verse 14: *móð hefir meira en maðr gamall, ok er mér fangs vón at frekum úlf* ‘[He] has more courage than an old man; I await the booty of the wild wolf’.⁴³⁸ The third verse of *Guðrúnarhvot* reads: *ef it móð ættið minna bræðra eða harðan hug Húnkonunga* ‘if you had the courage of my brothers or the hard spirit of the Hun kings’.⁴³⁹

Hellquist (on *mod*) observes that the meaning ‘decisiveness, courage’ for German *Mut* is late, from the thirteenth century, and that a German *Mut* with the older meaning of ‘mind, mood’ remains in compounds and in the expression *zu Mute*. Hellquist also believes that the meaning ‘courage’ in Swedish comes from Middle High German and that the meaning of ‘mind, mood’ for the same word ‘has been supplanted by this younger and probably borrowed meaning, but lives on in the expressions *i hastigt mod* ‘with a sense of haste’, *med berått mod* ‘with a sense of purpose’, *vara vid gott mod* ‘to be in good spirits’ and *till mods* ‘in a ... mood’.

Examples from *The Poetic Edda* paint a somewhat different picture, and the meaning of ‘brave’ seems conversely to have accompanied the word from proto-Norse times. In this context it is important to note the investigation of Scandinavian personal names containing the element *-modh* carried out by Lena Peterson (1981). Her analysis shows (p. 39) that there might have been ‘a proto-Norse adjective **mōðu-* (< **mōþu-*) which, along with the more common meaning ‘disturbed, distressed, tired’ and so on, because of the overlap in form with the noun *móðr* ‘mood, anger, courage’ etc. had the meaning of ‘angry,

⁴³⁷ ‘1) uro i sinnet, hugsrørsle, hugverk, harme, vreide, sinne. 2) sinn, hug. 3) mot, djervskap.’

⁴³⁸ ‘Mod har [han] mera än man, som är gammal; av vilde vargen väntar jag rov’ (Brate’s translation, 1913).

⁴³⁹ ‘om mod I hadn som mina bröder eller hunkonungarnes hårda sinne’ (Brate’s translation).

brave’.⁴⁴⁰ This again emphasises the likelihood of the noun *móðr* having not only the meaning of ‘anger’ and ‘mood’, but also ‘bravery’.

It is however undeniable that the OIcel. word *móðr* m. most often occurs as a first element in compounds with the meaning ‘mind’: *móð-akarn* n. is thus explained by Fritzner as a figurative designation for ‘heart’ – ‘grain or core, in which the soul, the mind has its seed or home’;⁴⁴¹ *móðfjall* n. is translated as ‘mountain of the mind, breast’ (*Lexicon Poeticum*);⁴⁴² *móðtregi* m. is explained as ‘heartfelt, inner sorrow’ (Fritzner).⁴⁴³ A number of adjectives also have the first element *móðr* in the meaning of ‘mind’: *móðrakkr* ‘brave of mind’,⁴⁴⁴ *móðoflugr* ‘strong-minded, brave’⁴⁴⁵ and so on (*Lexicon Poeticum*). The compound *móðrúnar* can consequently also be translated as ‘mind-runes’.

The word *móðr* m. is attested in Viking-Age and mediaeval runic inscriptions. The most celebrated example is in the form of an adjective in the sequence **hin þurmupi** ‘(the one) who has courage against Thor (or the one who has the courage to dare)’, which is encountered in Ög 136, the Rök inscription (Peterson 1981:35, fn. 122 and p. 38).

The expression **ioluns moþ**, the context of which leads Liestøl (1964; N B257) to translate ‘jolun’s misery’, occurs in an inscription on a wooden stick from Bergen dated to around 1330.⁴⁴⁶ The four spells of the inscription lack endings, as one of the ends of the stick has broken off (this is marked with three dots in the normalisation and translation). Liestøl (1964:41 f.) normalises and translates these as follows:⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁰ “ett urnordiskt adjektiv **mōðu-* (< **mōþu-*), som vid sidan av den vanligare betydelsen ‘upprörd, oroad, trött’ etc. på grund av formsammanfall med subst. *móðr* ‘sinne, vrede, mod’ etc. haft betydelsen ‘vred, modig’”

⁴⁴¹ ‘korn eller kjerne, hvori sjælen, sindet har sit sæde eller hjem’

⁴⁴² ‘sinds-fjæld, bryst’

⁴⁴³ ‘hjetelig, inderlig sorg’

⁴⁴⁴ ‘tapper av sind’

⁴⁴⁵ ‘kraftig av sind, modig’

⁴⁴⁶ Liestøl (1964:49 f.) admits that “it is tempting to make the simple correction to *jotun* and compare with the compound *jotunmóðr* which we know from *Hávamál* and *Grøttasöngur*. But since we have two examples of this ‘iolun’ we should probably assume that the word existed.” (“[d]et er freistande å gjera den enkle rettinga til *jotun* och sammanlikne med samansetninga *jotunmóðr* som vi kjenner frå *Hávamál* og *Grøttasöngur*. Men sidan vi har to døme på dette ‘iolun’ bør ein vel gå ut ifrå at ordet eksisterte.”) He further observes that the word *joll* (*joll* in Fritzner) is used in *Lokasenna* (verse 3: *joll ok áfu færi ek ása sonum, ok blend ek þeim svá meini mjöd* ‘evil and fury I bring to the sons of the Æsir and thus mix malice in the mead for them’ (‘ondska och ilska för jag åt asars söner och blandar dem så men i mjödet’, Brate’s translation) and suggests a meaning for this word based on the context (above all the two parallel words in the following verse: *hrópi* and *rógi* ‘shouting, fighting’ (‘baktaling, bakvasking, strid’): “It is a matter of evil wishes, and there is malice in the concept of ‘joll’, and we expect the same to underlie ‘jolun’ too.” (“Det er tale om vonde ynskje, og det ligg mein i omgreppet ‘joll’, og det same ventar vi ligg attom ‘jolun’ òg.”) Cf. Lorenzo Lozzi Gallo 2001, who prefers the reading **iatuns moþ** and discusses possible interpretations of this runic sequence.

⁴⁴⁷ I mark the vowel as long in the pers. pron. *þú* in Liestøl’s normalisation.

Side A	Side B	Side C	Side D
<i>Ríst ek bótrúnar, ríst ek bjargrúnar, einfalt við alfum, tvífalt við trollum, þrífalt við þ(ursum) ...</i>	<i>við inni skæðu 'skag'-valkyrju svát ei megi þótt æ vili lævis kona[!] líf þínu ...</i>	<i>ek sendi þér, ek síða þér ylgjar ergi ok úþola. Á þér renni úþóli ok 'joluns' móð. Sittu aldri, sof þú aldri ...</i>	<i>ant mér sem sjalfri þér. beirist : rubus : ra- bus : ep : aranta- bus : laus : abus : rosa : gaua ...</i>

I carve cure-runes, I carve help-runes. Once against the elves, twice against the trolls, three times against the o[gres] ... against the harmful 'skag' valkyrie so that she will never be able to although she always wants to. (You) evil woman! Your life ... I cast on you, I enchant you [with] the perversity of wolves and misery. May unendurable torment and the misery of the 'iolun' pour over you. You will never be able to sit, you will never be able to sleep ... love me as yourself. **beirist** etc.⁴⁴⁸

It is clear from the normalisation that Liestøl interprets **mop** in the inscription as *móðr* m. or n. and that he translates the word as 'misery'. It is not quite clear to me whether this is the same word as *mōðr* on the Ladoga plate or a different lexeme: I have nevertheless chosen to cite the inscription in its entirety as it offers a further two compounds prefixed to *rúnar*: *bótrúnar* and *bjargrúnar*.

Compounds with *-rúnar/-rūnar* are well-known both in Old Icelandic literature and in older and younger runic inscriptions. Our material offers the Skänninge plate's *lyfrúnar* and *bótrúnar* 'healing-runes' and 'cure-runes' respectively. A semantically close compound *biargrúnar* 'help-runes' seems to occur on the Østermarie plate, which is dated 1000–1150. I further suggest reading a runic sequence **ilfusrūn** on the Järfälla plate and interpreting this as *illfūsrun* 'malevolent rune' or 'evil secret'.

Two compounds with **-rūnō-* occur in the proto-Norse material: **hidez runono**, **ginorono**z on DR 357 and **haidz runo**, **ginarunaz** on DR 360. Stephen E. Flowers (1986:144) normalises and translates these words as *haidr-rūnō* 'bright and shining runes' and *gina-rūnar* 'magically powerful runes' respectively and observes that "there are often compounds with **rūnō-* which demonstrate its place in a cosmic and/or magical world-view." Occurring on a further Danish runestone (the Malt stone, DR NOR1988;5, which is dated c. 800–900) are the compounds *tæitirūnar* 'runes of gladness' and *ævinrūnar* 'runes of eternal friendship'. A similar compound is found in *Hávamál* (verses 120, 130), *gamanrúnar* 'runes of gladness'. These 'runes of gladness' are also referred to in *Sigrdrífumál* (6), which furthermore contains the greatest number of compounds of this type (verses 7–14, 20).

⁴⁴⁸ "Eg rister botruner, eg rister bergingsruner. Ein gong mot alvane, dobbelt mot trolla, tredobbelt mot t[ussane] ... mot den skadelege 'skag'-valkyrja slik at ho aldri skal kunne endá ho allstødt vil. (Du) meinvis kone! Livet ditt ... eg sender på deg, eg seider på deg ulveargskap og utole. Måtte utolig pine og 'ioluns' elende renne på deg. Du skal aldri få sitte, du skal aldrig få sova, ... elsk meg som sjøve deg. **beirist** osv."

When Sigurd asks the valkyrie Sigdriva to teach him wisdom, she explains to him which runes he must master. She also instructs him exactly how to use them: Sigurd should carve *sigrúnar* ‘victory-runes’ on the hilt of the sword, *ql-rúnar* ‘ale-runes’ are carved on the horn and on the back of the hand, while the rune Need is carved on the nail; he should carve *bjargrúnar* ‘help-runes’ into the palm. Sigdriva further explains to him about *brimrúnar* ‘surging sea-runes’, which are useful for saving ships; they should be carved on the prow and on the blade of the rudder and be burnt into the oars with fire. Sigurd will need *limrúnar* if he wants a healer’s knowledge; these ‘limb-runes’ should be carved into the bark of a tree whose limbs (branches?) point towards the east. Sigurd will also need to know *málrúnar* ‘speech-runes’⁴⁴⁹ to speak well at the Thing, and *hugrúnar* ‘thought-runes, mind-runes’ to exceed all others in wisdom. Verse 20 of *Sigrdrífumál* again names *bjargrúnar* and *qlrúnar*, as well as two new compounds: *bókrúnar*⁴⁵⁰ and *meginrúnar*.

Depending on one’s interpretation of the first element *mōð(r)*-, either the compound *meginrúnar* ‘power(ful) runes’ (cf. ‘zeal, desire for battle’ for *mōðr*) or *hugrúnar* ‘mind-runes’ (cf. ‘mind, troubled mind’ for *mōðr*) are semantically closest to the *mōðrúnar* of the Ladoga plate. The inscription on the plate thus contributes a unique compound which simultaneously finds good support in parallel linguistic expressions.

7.2.3 Summary

The runic plates from Rjurikovo Gorodišče and Staraja Ladoga are associated both typologically and runologically with the remaining Viking-Age runic plates. The Ladoga plate most resembles in shape the trapezoid plates 4 and 5 from Solberga although it has an unusual attachment for hanging which may result from a repair. In size and shape, Gorodišče plate 1 most resembles the Hovgård plate and Björkö plate 1. Both of these, like Gorodišče plate 1, also have metal wires for hanging. Gorodišče plate 2 resembles the Hallbjäns plate in size and shape.

It may be observed that as regards the runes on the Russian plates, partly encrypted texts also occur on other runic plates, e.g. the Roskilde plate, the obverse of Solberga plate 1 and the first line of the Kvinneby plate. There are possibly also fully encrypted plates, such as the Hovgård plate. With reference to the language of the inscriptions, it can be noted that the Ladoga plate contains at least three words which conform very well to the vocabulary attested on other runic plates (*prā* or *pā*, *mōðrúnar* and *fā*).

⁴⁴⁹ ‘Speech-runes’ are also named on a rib bone from Scania (DR Til5) which has been dated to the Middle Ages.

⁴⁵⁰ It has been suggested that the word *bókrúnar* in *The Poetic Edda* (*Sigrdrífumál*) is actually a copying error for *bótrúnar* (Liestøl 1964:41; Dillmann 1995:23; Björkhager & Gustavson 2002: 192; Flowers 1986:182, note 125), since we have two runic inscriptions with the word *bótrúnar*, namely the inscription from Bryggen in Bergen (N B257) with its *bótrúnar* and *bjargrúnar*, and the inscription on the Skänninge plate (Ög NOR2001:32), which has *bōtrúnar* and *lyfrúnar*.

The similarities between the plates from Gorodišče and Björkö, as well as the occurrence on the Gorodišče plates of runes of the same type as those on the Rök stone, indicate that these plates may derive from a Swedish tradition. The Ladoga plate is more ambiguous: the older runes **h**, **a** and **m** occur in both younger Swedish and Danish runic inscriptions, and attestations of balanced runes are also found both in Denmark and Sweden. I therefore refrain from suggesting any corresponding localisation of tradition for the Ladoga plate. Suggestive of an East Scandinavian origin is however the plate's early dating to the 900s, as the earliest runic plates all come from Swedish territory.

8 Results and conclusion

sæst : niþær : $\overline{\text{ok}}$ · rat : run $\overline{\text{ar}}$: ris : up · $\overline{\text{ok}}$
Sezt niðr ok ráð rúnar, ris upp ok
‘Sit down and interpret the runes, stand up and’
N B584

The empirical results I have achieved are presented in this chapter. These are primarily conclusions about the content of the runic plates, i.e. their runes and the inscriptions they comprise. Throughout the manuscript, I repeatedly inquire what the text on the runic plate can with certitude be stated to contain. The answer to this question is given below in the form of compact tables with accompanying commentary. I first present the definite rune-forms and their possible identifications, followed by a glossary of the words found in the (most) certain interpretations, as promised in the introduction, and a brief discussion of the formulaic language. Lastly, the content of the runic plates is juxtaposed with their findplaces.

8.1 The appearance and rune-forms of the Viking-Age runic plates

It can generally be noted that most of the runic plates (between 36 and 39) are carved on two sides. The corpus contains only seven plates indubitably carved on only one side. Furthermore, more than half of the double-sided plates have more than two lines of text. In total, 23 plates are carved exclusively with conventional runes (long-branch runes and short-twig runes); 16 plates have both conventional and unconventional runes (secret runes and rune-like signs), while five plates are carved exclusively with unconventional runes. Of these five plates, three remain uninterpreted, while two have disputed interpretations (Gorodišče plates 1 and 2). Two of the plates considered in the corpus have carvings comprising solely rune-like lines.

Of the 28 runic plates whose reading order can be established, the inscriptions usually run from left to right (25 examples, of which 9 plates also show boustrophedon order). Three plates however show a more unusual reading order: Lund plate 1 was carved from right to left and from left to right in the same row (beginning in the middle of the writing surface); the Hallbjäns plate was carved from left to right and from right to left in the same row beginning at the edges of the writing surface; the Eketorp plate was carved from left to right on one side and from right to left on the other.


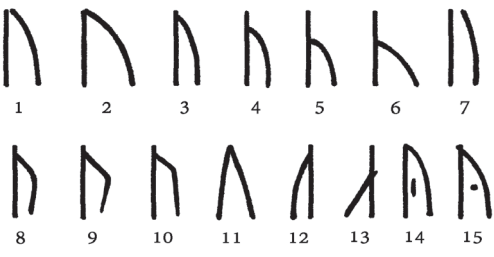
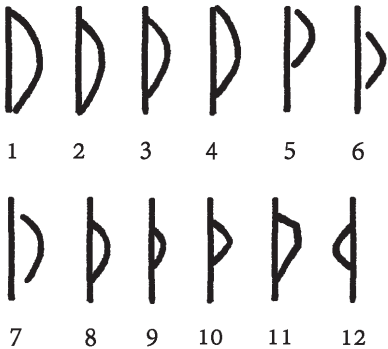

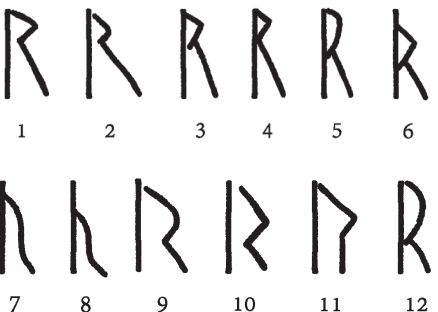
The runic plates never show regular word division, as indicated either by punctuation marks or by distance, but there are markers beginning and concluding sentences. It is interesting to observe that punctuation marks most often occur in the form of a cross (comprising horizontal or oblique lines), or consist of straight vertical lines (Table 18).





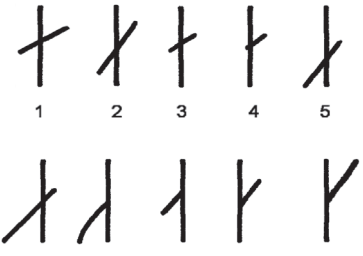


I have analysed the various shapes of the runes, but I do not divide these into graphic types and graphic variants as this would have required more time than was at my disposal. Types of graphs and graphic variants are thus here arranged alongside one other. I choose to focus on characteristics such as 1) position of the graph in relation to the framing lines and to other runes (if the rune is inverted or reversed, it is thus considered a new variant; I do not regard slant as a distinctive feature, however); 2) length and shape of the branch (short~long, curved~straight); 3) position of the branch in relation to the stave (i.e. the angle between the branch and mainstave) as well as 4) number of branches. (Cf. also the terminology in the introduction to the catalogue as well as in Appendix 1 ('Bilaga 1') in the catalogue.)

I divide the runes into conventional and unconventional, and provide a number under every rune-form: **f1**, **f2** etc. I note the plates on which the various rune-forms occur (plates are referred to by their number in the catalogue); thus for example **f1** occurs on plates 34, 35 and 40. In this way the reader can easily locate the relevant graphs. I attempt to provide as many attestations (for each of the 46 plates) as permitted by this means of recording, although I do not list how many times a certain rune-form occurs on a particular plate. While the number of attestations specified in this way is therefore not completely representative, it nevertheless indicates the usage of specific rune-forms. The recording of only one attestation means that this rune-form is rare (although it should be observed that it may nevertheless occur several times in the same inscription), while three or four attestations suggest that the form is relatively common.

Inverted, reversed and dotted runes as well as bind-runes used to correct errors are listed among the conventional runes. Unconventional runes include different types of identifiable code (consisting of balanced runes, unconventional bind-runes, older runes and staveless runes) as well as unidentified rune-forms. While I do not include problematic readings of conventional runes, I make an exception for unconventional runes. The unconventional runes here designated as 'read' may have uncertain readings and lack interpretation but I do not discuss the validity of the readings here; this is instead done in the catalogue. Some of the unconventional runes which have been read – and this applies primarily to bind-runes – have alternative readings which cannot be considered here; the catalogue must be consulted as these are not marked either. I do not however include all the unconventional runes which have been read, but only those whose identification seems to be comparatively secure; consequently, not every bind-rune from the Deerness plate or the Hovgård plate, for example, is considered, but only those which according to my investigation are least problematic.

Table 8. Conventional runes.

 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	f1 – 34, 35, 40; f2 – 5, 25, 32, 34, 36, 40; f3 – 24, 39, 42; f4 – 24; f5 – 32, 35; f6 – 33, 41, 42; f7 – 42.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	u1 – 1, 5, 9, 40; u2 – 2, 23, 35; u3 – 15, 24, 25, 41; u4 – 15, 24, 4; u5 – 39; u6 – 35; u7 – 35; u8 – 38; u9 – 3; u10 – 3; u11 – 23, 25, 31, 46; u12 – 37; u13 – 18?, 27?; y14 – 40, 41; y15 – 25.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	p1 – 15, 18, 35; p2 – 3, 25; p3 – 1, 24; p4 – 6, 24; p5 – 2; p6 – 14; p7 – 14; p8 – 40, 41, 42; p9 – 6, 23; p10 – 5, 40, 41; p11 – 18, 25, 40, 41; p12 – 41.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	o1 – 3, 4; o2 – 6, 41; o3 – 21; o4 – 18; o5 – 15; o6 – 24, 25, 35, 40; o7 – 32, 41.
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	r1 – 9, 15, 32, 33, 40, 46; r2 – 1, 2, 20; r3 – 4, 40, 46; r4 – 3, 41; r5 – 3, 18, 41; r6 – 40; r7 – 23, 24, 29, 33, 38; r8 – 25; r9 – 5, 35; r10 – 32, 33; r11 – 5, 32; r12 – 18, 27.

 <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</p>	<p>k1 – 1, 31, 32; k2 – 22, 25; k3 – 35; k4 – 3, 41; k5 – 23, 25, 40; k6 – 41; k7 – 3, g8 – 25, 40.</p>
 <p>1 2 3</p>	<p>h1 – 2, 14, 15, 21, 22, 33, 34, 40; h2 – 20, 29?, 35; h3 – 27.</p>
 <p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>n1 – 3, 14, 40, 41, 42, 46; n2 – 9, 15, 20, 38; n3 – 46; n4 – 4, 35; n5 – 25?, 35.</p>
 <p>1 2 3</p>	<p>i1 – in principle all with the i-rune; e2 – 4, 40; e3 – 20 (in the bind-rune eī).</p>
 <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>	<p>a1 – 14, 24, 40, 41, 42; a2 – 3, 5, 22, 32, 34, 35; a3 – 18, 31, 32; a4 – 23; a5 – 35; a6 – 35; a7 – 20; a8 – 9, 20, 25, 31, 39; a9 – 18; a10 – 4, 25.</p>
 <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</p>	<p>s1 – 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 23, 25, 32, 40, 41; s2 – 41; s3 – 41; s4 – 41; s5 – 31, 39; s6 – 35; s7 – 24, 33; s8 – 27.</p>
 <p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>t1 – 1, 6, 15, 24, 35, 40, 41, 42; t2 – 41; t3 – 4, 17, 20, 33; t4 – 31; t5 – 35.</p>

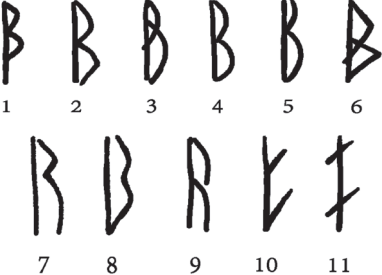


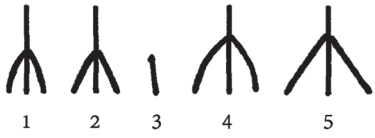
 <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p> <p>7 8 9 10 11</p>	<p>b1 – 20, 40, 46; b2 – 5, 41; b3 – 17, 21; b4 – 21; b5 – 23; b6 – 1;</p> <p>b7 – 3; b8 – 4; b9 – 6?; b10 – 31; b11 – 18.</p>
 <p>1 2 3</p>	<p>m1 – 37, 40, 41, 42; m2 – 25, 32, 34; m3 – 31?</p>
 <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>l1 – 20, 24, 36; l2 – 20, 24, 45, l3 – 9?, 25, 34, 35; l4 – 35.</p>
 <p>1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>r1 – 33, 40, 41; r2 – 24, 41; r3 – 39; r4 – 4, 27; r5 – 35.</p>

Table 9. Conventional bind-runes.


 <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</p>	<p>b1 – 41 ab; b2 – 35 ai; b3 – 32 ra; b4 – 27 tn (?); b5 – 25 st; b6 – 25 tū; b7 – 24 uf; b8 – 23 un; b9 – 20 el.</p>
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Table 10. Balanced runes.

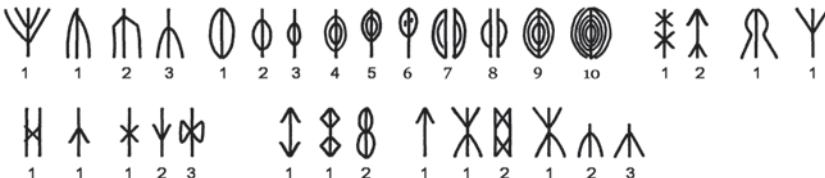















 <p>1 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 2 1 1</p>	<p>f1 – 12. u1 – 12; u2 – 12; u3 – 12. p1 – 12; p2 – 12, 17, 36; p3 – 5; p4 – 12, 36; p5 – 12; p6 – 12; p7 – 41; p8 – 28; p9 – 5, 36; p10 – 36. o1 – 10, 11, 41; o2 – 12. r1 – 12, 41. k1 – 12. h1 – 12. n1 – 12. a1 – 12; a2 – 12; a3 – 36. t1 – 6, 12, 37?. b1 – 41; b2 – 21. l1 – 12. m1 – 10?, 12, 17?, 37, 41; m2 – 10, 12. r1 – 10?, 17?, 41; r2 – 12; r3 – 12.</p>
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Table 16. Runes with non-graphematic branches.

					
1	2	3	4	5	6

ng1 – 40 **h**; ng2 – 40 **r**; ng3 – 40 **s**; ng4 – 40 **t**; ng5 – 40 **kr**; ng6 – 40 **p**.















Table 17. Unconventional unidentified runes (selection).

								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

							
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

unread1 – 28, 29; unread2 – 28; unread3 – 37; unread4 – 28; unread5 – 28; unread6 – 28; unread7 – 17; unread8 – 26; unread9 – 26; unread10 – 28; unread11 – 26; unread12 – 17; unread13 – 17; unread14 – 17; unread15 – 17; unread16 – 17; unread17 – 17.

Table 18. Punctuation marks and swastikas.

													
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	

pm1 – 2, 5, 9, 24, 25, 38?, 40; pm2 – 5; pm3 – 17?, 10?; pm4 – 31; pm5 – 15, 41; pm6 – 25; pm7 – 25; pm8 – 17; pm9 – 17; pm10 – 1?; pm11 – 3, 33; pm12 – 18, 19; sw1 – 28; sw2 – 28.

For easily comprehensible reasons, rune-forms on metal plates are different from those carved in stone: it is easy to carve into metal and requires neither co-workers nor a particular workspace nor special tools. The runes **f**, **k**, **m**, **r** on runic plates have straight branches more often than they do on runestones; furthermore, angled bows on runes such as **p** and **b** occur more often on runic plates than on runestones (see e.g. *SRI* 3, p. 62, on rune-forms from Södermanland, where **f**, **k**, **m** and **r** rarely have straight branches and **b** and **p** never have angled bows). This is most probably due to the properties of the material. The variation in rune-forms on plates also seems much greater than that observable on runestones.

There are very few dotted runes, which may be due to dotting being more difficult to either carve or discern on small plates than on runestones. A dotted *i*-rune occurs, for example, only in two or three inscriptions (the plates from Kvinneby, Østermarie and probably also Old Uppsala 2).

Bind-runes on the other hand occur much more frequently than on runestones, but this is a consequence of their often being used to complicate readings rather than occurring as corrections (cf. MacLeod 2002:152–154). Other diverse types of encryption also occur more often on the plates (in comparison with the number of Swedish runestones with cryptic runes, for example). Moreover, different methods of encryption are not infrequently combined on the plates, such that bind-runes, for example, can occur together with balanced runes, and coordinate runes occur on the same plate as staveless runes.

Short-twigg runes are rare on the plates, being attested on only seven (the plates from Hallbjäns, Ulvsunda, Uppåkra, Björkö plate 1, Old Uppsala plate 2, Klinta plates 1 and 2); long-branch runes are otherwise completely dominant. Affiliations in rune-form, geographical origin etc. of runic plates with conventional and unconventional runes respectively are covered in the following investigation.

8.2 Glossary of the Viking-Age runic plates

Listed below in Tables 19–26 are the names and other words discussed in the manuscript which I judge to be certain attestations of the vocabulary encountered on the runic plates. These lists contain material from my interpretations of a number of the plates, i.e. in cases where these appear to be more convincing than earlier interpretations due to a more secure reading, for example. Subjectivity is unavoidable here as we lack objective criteria to unequivocally distinguish between certain and uncertain readings and interpretations.

The glossary does not contain interpretations of Vassunda plate 3, nor the plates from Villberga nor Leksand, as I deem these to be too dubious. Nor is the interpretation of Sigtuna plate 2 included since the inscription may be in Latin or pseudo-Latin.

The glossary is arranged according to word class (personal names; other nouns; pronouns; adjectives and present participles; adverbs; numbers; verbs including past participles; and a final group comprising prepositions, particles, and conjunctions). The attestations are arranged alphabetically within these groups and normalised to runic Scandinavian in the glossary. If an attested form coincides with the form found in the dictionary, the normalisation is not repeated. The abbreviations used in the glossary can be found in the list of abbreviations on pp. 14–15.

Table 19. Personal names.

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>Āki</i> m. ‘Åke’	...aki	Østermarie plate (4)	May be a different masculine name with <i>an</i> -stem
<i>Bōfi</i> m. ‘Bove’	bufi nom. bufa (twice) dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain Certain
<i>-kārr</i>	kar	Uppåkra plate (9)	Probably a masculine name
<i>Katrīna</i> f. ‘Katarina’	...rina nom. ...atrina nom.	Old Uppsala plate 1 (20)	Certain
<i>Krīstr</i> m. ‘Christ’	krīstr nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>Ólof</i> f. ‘Oluf’	oluf nom. uluf nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain Certain
<i>Mikael</i> m. ‘Mikael/ Michael’	mikaēl nom.?	Old Uppsala plate 1 (20)	Probable
<i>Ragn-, Rauð- or Rand-</i>	ra...	Uppåkra plate (9)	Possibly a feminine name
<i>Sankta Maria</i> f. ‘Saint Mary’	santa maria nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>Sigmōðr</i> m. ‘Sigmod’	sigmoþr nom.	Østermarie plate (4)	Certain
<i>Sigvarðr</i> m. ‘Sigvard’	siuarþ acc.	Roskilde plate (5)	Certain
<i>Þōrr</i> m. ‘Thor’	þor nom.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain

Table 20. Other nouns.

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>berg</i> f. ‘protection, help’	birg sg. acc.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>biargguma</i> f. ‘help- ing-woman, midwife’	biarguma sg. nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>biargrūn</i> f. ‘help-rune’	bi(a)rkrunar <i>biargrūnar</i> pl. acc.	Østermarie plate (4)	Certain
<i>bōtrūn</i> f. ‘cure-rune’	butrunar <i>bōtrūnar</i> pl. acc.	Skänninge plate (46)	Certain
<i>drōttinn</i> m. ‘chief- tain, prince, lord’	trutin sg. nom.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>fyllyt̃</i> f. or n. ‘com- plete assistance’	fulti <i>fullt̃(i)</i> sg. dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain reading and probable interpretation
<i>guð</i> n. ‘god’	kuþ pl. nom.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>haf</i> n. ‘sea’	hafi sg. dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>hamarr</i> m. ‘hammer’	hamri sg. dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>hauss</i> m. ‘head, skull’	haus sg. acc.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain

<i>heill</i> n. or f. ‘luck’ or ‘amulet’	heil sg. dat. or acc.	Roskilde plate (5)	Certain reading and probable interpretation
<i>hyrr</i> m. ‘fire’	hur sg. nom.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>ȝotunn</i> m. ‘giant’	iotun sg. nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>kona</i> f. ‘woman, wife’	kunu <i>konu</i> sg. dat.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
	kunu <i>konu</i> sg. dat.	Skørrebrovej plate (3)	Certain
<i>lyf</i> f. or n. ‘remedy, magical agent’	lufia <i>lyfia</i> sg. gen.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
	luf sg. nom.	Roskilde plate (5)	Certain
<i>lyfrūn</i> f. ‘healing-rune, magic rune’	lufrunar <i>lyfrūnar</i> pl. acc.	Skänninge plate (46)	Certain
<i>maðr</i> m. ‘man’	mans <i>manns</i> sg. gen.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>mōðir</i> f. ‘mother’	mopir sg. nom.	Østermarie plate (4)	Certain
<i>mōðrūn</i> f. ‘courage-rune’/‘anger-rune’/‘mind-rune’	muprunar sg. gen. or pl. acc.	Ladoga plate (12)	Certain
<i>nauðr</i> f. ‘need, affliction, pressure, torment’	noþir <i>nauðir</i> f. pl. acc.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>rūn</i> f. ‘secret, secret knowledge’ or ‘rune’	rūn f. sg. nom.	Ullsunda plate (31)	Probable
	rūn f. sg. nom.	Klinta plate 1 (38)	Probable
<i>sālǫld</i> n. ‘grave-ale’	s-ǫlǫlt sg. nom.	Högstena plate (35)	Probable
<i>sārriða</i> f. ‘wound-fever’	sarriþu <i>sārriðu</i> sg. gen.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>tōm</i> n. ‘time’	īþumi <i>ī tōmi</i> dat.	Skørrebrovej plate (3)	Probable
<i>tȳ</i> f. or n. ‘help, benefit, assistance’	tu <i>tȳ</i> sg. acc.	Roskilde plate (5)	Probable
<i>þrā</i> f. ‘torment, affliction, longing (distressing longing for liberation from affliction)’	þrar <i>þrār</i> f. pl. acc.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>þōr</i> m. ‘boil’/name of a sickness demon?	þur sg. nom.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Uncertain interpretation due to the alternative interpretation <i>þurs</i> (see below)
<i>þurs</i> m. ‘troll, giant, demon’	þurus sg. nom.	Hallbjäns plate (15)	Certain; the word contains the svara-bhakti vowel [u].
	þurs sg. nom.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	With double-reading of the s -rune over the punctuation mark; the reading is somewhat uncertain.
	þursa <i>þursa</i> pl. gen.		Certain
	þurs sg. nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
	þurs sg. nom.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain

<i>ulfr</i> m. ‘wolf, sickness demon?’	ulf sg. nom. ulfr (twice) sg. nom.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Lacking nom. ending; all attestations are certain.
<i>vā</i> f. ‘harm, bad luck’	ua sg. nom. uq sg. acc.	Ulvunda plate (31) Järfälla plate (23)	Certain Probable
<i>vitt</i> n. ‘magic, magical agent’	uit sg. nom.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain reading and probable interpretation

Table 21. Pronouns.

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>ek</i> pers. pron. ‘I’	ik <i>ek</i> or k ’ <i>k</i>	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	ik	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
	ik	Järfälla plate	Probable
	⟨i⟩k or k ’ <i>k</i>	Skänninge plate (46)	Certain
	k ’ <i>k</i>	Roskilde plate (5)	Probable
<i>ekki</i> pron. ‘no, nothing’	eki n. acc.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>hann</i> pers. pron. ‘he’	hans gen. hanum (twice) dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain Certain
	han <i>hann</i> sg. acc. han <i>hann</i> sg. nom. or acc.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain Certain
<i>sā(r)</i> dem. pron. ‘the, he’	þem <i>þeim/þēm</i> m. sg. dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>sā(r)si</i> dem. pron. ‘this’	þisi <i>þessi</i> f. pl. acc.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>sēr</i> refl. pron. ‘himself/herself/itself’	sir sg. dat.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>sinn</i> poss. pron.	sin sg. acc.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>þū</i> pers. pron. ‘you’	þu þir <i>þēr</i> (twice) dat. ‘you’	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
	þir <i>þēr</i> (twice) dat. ‘you’	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	þir <i>þēr</i> (twice) dat. ‘you’	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
	þir <i>þēr</i> dat. ‘you’	Järfälla plate (23)	Certain

Table 22. Adjectives and present participles.

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>argr</i> adj. ‘angry, perverse, grotesque’	arki <i>argi</i> weak decl. sg. nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>farandi</i> pres. part. ‘travelling’	f(a)rantā <i>faranda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>fliūgandi</i> pres. part. ‘flying’	fliuhānta <i>fliūganda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>galandi</i> pres. part. ‘enchanting’	kalanta <i>galanda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Uncertain interpretation (cf. v. <i>gala</i> below)
<i>galgall</i> adj. ‘destined to be hanged, gallows-bird’	kalkla <i>galgla</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Probable
<i>hæilagr</i> adj. ‘holy’	halhi <i>hælg</i> def. m. sg. nom. (twice or thrice)	Old Uppsala plate 1 (20)	Two attestations can be considered certain; the third is uncertain.
<i>illfūss</i> adj. ‘malevolent, ill-intentioned’	ilfūs <i>illfūs</i> f. sg. nom.	Järfälla plate (23)	Certain
<i>illr</i> adj. ‘evil’	ilu <i>illu</i> (twice) n. sg. dat.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>meramuldiǵr</i> adj. or <i>meramuldlīkr</i> adj. ‘covered with crushed earth’	miramultika <i>meramuldlīka</i> sg. acc.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Second alternative more lexemically probable
<i>rīðandi</i> pres. part. ‘swinging’	riþa(n)ta <i>rīðanda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>rinnandi</i> pres. part. ‘ending, killing’	rinanta <i>rinnanda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>sæliandi</i> pres. part. ‘offering’	salianta <i>sælianda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>signandi</i> pres. part. ‘signing, performing magic’	sikn(ānt)a <i>signanda</i> sg. or pl. acc.	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>þrihofðaðr</i> adj. ‘three-headed’	þrihufþa <i>þrihofðaða</i> sg. acc.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	With haplography or loss of unstressed vowel between similar consonants; certain
<i>þrymiandi</i> pres. part. ‘howling, roaring’	þrymianti sg. nom.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>vīss</i> adj. ‘certain, knowledgeable, safe, enlightened, known’	uis m. sg. nom.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain

Table 23. Adverbs.

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>alt</i> ‘all, everywhere, completely, entirely’	alt	Kvinneby plate (40)	Interpretation uncertain due to the alternative interpretation alti haldi ‘may hold’
<i>hēr</i> ‘here’	hir	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>nū</i> ‘now’	nū	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain; the u -rune comprises part of the bind-rune ūf .
<i>ok</i> ‘and, also’	auk	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>svā</i> ‘thus, so’	sua	Østermarie plate (4)	Certain

Table 24. Numbers (not arranged in alphabetical order).

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>þrīr</i> ‘three’	þriar <i>þrīar</i> f. acc.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain
<i>nīu</i> ‘nine’	niu <i>nīu</i> f. acc.	Sigtuna plate 1 (24)	Certain

Table 25. Verbs (incl. past participles).

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>bauga</i> ‘bind with a ring, encircle’	baugar <i>baugar</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	b -rune comprises part of the bind-rune ab ; certain.
<i>barna</i> ‘become pregnant’	barna inf.	Skørrebrovej plate (3)	Certain
<i>biarga</i> ‘help, protect’	biarki <i>biargi</i> 3 pers. pl. pres. subj.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>biðia</i> ‘ask, entreat, offer, demand’	biþ <i>bið</i> 1 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Järfälla plate (23)	Certain
<i>bregða</i> ‘move quickly, turn, throw, pull, change, terminate, destroy’	bra <i>brā</i> 3 pers. sg. pret. ind.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Uncertain interpretation due to the alternative but less likely interpretation * <i>brā</i> ‘lightning’

<i>fā</i> ‘obtain, achieve, bring’	fer <i>fær</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	fa <i>fæ</i> 2 pers. imp. or <i>fā</i> 1 pers. pres. ind.	Ladoga plate (12)	Probable
	frk <i>fekk</i> 1 pers. sg. pret.	Roskilde plate (5)	Probable
<i>fā</i> ‘paint, draw, write, carve’	fa <i>fā</i> 1 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>finna</i> ‘find’	funtin past part. m. sg. nom.	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain
<i>flyja</i> ‘flee’	fliu <i>fly</i> 2 pers. sg. imp.	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain
	fly 2 pers. sg. imp.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>fōða</i> ‘give nourishment, feed’	fupir <i>fōðir</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Högstena plate (35)	Probable
<i>gala</i> ‘enchant, sing spells, shriek’	either in the form gal 1 pers. sg. pres. ind. or galanta pres. part.	Högstena plate (35)	Uncertain interpretation
<i>gæta</i> ‘protect, take care of’	keti <i>gæti</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. subj.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>hafa</i> ‘have’	af 2 pers. sg. imp.	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain
	ifir 3 pers. sg. pres.	Certain	Certain
<i>hialpa</i> ‘help’	ialbi 3 pers. sg. pres. subj.	Old Uppsala plate 1 (20)	Certain
<i>koma</i> ‘come’	kam 3 pers. sg. pret.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>liða um</i> ‘go away, disappear’ is found in the form <i>umliðinn</i> past part.	umliþin m. sg. nom.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>niūta</i> ‘get, use, enjoy’	niut <i>niūt</i> 2 pers. sg. imp.	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain
<i>ōiðka</i> ‘destroy’	oipki 1 pers. sg. pres. subj.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>rīsta</i> ‘carve’	risti or rist 1. pers. sg. pres. ind., pret. ind. or pres. subj.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	ristar <i>rīstær</i> 3 pers. sg. pres.	Østermarie plate (4)	Unexpected α -rune (see Steenholt-Olesen 2007: 93–94); certain.
	reist <i>ræist</i> strong decl. 3 pers. sg. pret.	Østermarie plate (4)	Certain
<i>samrāða</i> ‘consult one another’	samraþa inf.	Skørrebrovej plate (3)	Certain
<i>seiða</i> ‘enchant’	saiþi <i>seiði</i> 1 pers. sg. pres. subj.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>skaða</i> ‘harm’	skapi 3 pers. sg. pres. subj.	Ulvunda plate (31)	Certain
<i>una</i> ‘find satisfaction, settle down, remain (at a place)’	unir <i>unir</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain

<i>vesa/vera</i> ‘be’	is <i>es</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain
	is <i>es</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	eru <i>eru</i> 3 pers. pl. pres. ind.	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>virka/værka</i> ‘pain, have pain’	uirti <i>virkti</i> 3 pers. sg. pres. subj. or pret. ind.	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>æirumarka</i> ‘carve healing signs; sign with healing signs’	irumarkar 3 pers. sg. pres. ind.	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
<i>ælti</i> ‘set in motion, spur on, drive, incite, hunt, pursue, dispel, drive off’	altit <i>æltit</i> 2 pers. pl. imp. (with dual pron.): <i>æltið-it</i> = <i>æltit</i>	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain reading and probable interpretation

Table 26. Prepositions, particles, articles and conjunctions.

<i>Normalisation to runic Scandinavian and interpretation</i>	<i>Form in the inscription</i>	<i>Name of plate (catalogue no)</i>	<i>Comments on the reliability of the reading or interpretation</i>
<i>aþ</i> prep. ‘of’	aþ	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>at</i> prep. ‘there, thither’	at	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>en</i> conj. ‘and, who’	in	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>frān</i> prep. ‘from’	fran (twice)	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	fran	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
	fran	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>(h)inn</i> def. art.	in	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain
	hin (twice)	Solberga plate 2 (42)	Certain
<i>með(r)</i> prep. ‘with’	mir (twice)	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>ok</i> conj. ‘and, but’	auk	Sigtuna plate 1 (23)	Certain
	auk	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
	auk	Østermarie plate (4)	Certain
	auk (twice) uk	Solberga plate 1 (41)	Certain Certain
	auk uk	Skørrebrovej plate (3)	Certain
<i>um</i> prep. with acc. ‘with, around, because of, with the help of’	um	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>undir</i> prep. ‘under’	untir	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>úr</i> prep. ‘out of, from’	hur	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain
<i>viðr</i> prep. ‘with, at, because of, against’	uiþr (eight times)	Högstena plate (35)	Certain
<i>yfir</i> prep. ‘over’	yfir	Kvinneby plate (40)	Certain

One immediately observes that certain types of words are more common in the lexicon of the runic plates than others, and that there is a large number of verbs meaning ‘get, obtain’, ‘help’, ‘practise magic’, ‘carve, make signs’, ‘damage, destroy’. Verbs in the present tense (ind. or subj.) or the imperative occur significantly more often than verbs in the preterite. The nouns on the runic plates can easily be grouped according to theme, as for example ‘help and healing’, ‘harm and malevolent magic’ or designations of different types of runes. The vocabulary of the runic plates thereby diverges greatly from that of the runestones, although some of the words on the plates are also attested on runestones, e.g. *haf* n. ‘sea’, *hamarr* m. ‘hammer’ and so on. There are nonetheless many words which occur uniquely on the runic plates.

The presence of women in the inscriptions, if we confine ourselves to the use of nouns, is more substantial than that of men: this is indicated by words such as *biargguma* ‘helping-woman’, *kona* ‘woman’ (twice) and *mōðir* ‘mother’. The only noun expressly denoting a man is *maðr*⁴⁵¹ in the expression *manns konu* ‘man’s woman’ on Solberga plate 2; tellingly enough, it is used in a construction referring to a woman. A consideration of the personal pronouns shows that ‘I’ and ‘you’ dominate. The pronoun ‘he, him’ is also frequent, being used four times, although only two cases refer to a man, Bove, while two refer to trolls. One might then expect to encounter a greater number of feminine names than masculine ones in the inscriptions on runic plates. The certain anthroponymic attestations nevertheless depict a Viking-Age society similar to that found in the runestone inscriptions, comprising three feminine and six masculine names. (The only two certain attestations of theonyms, *Thor* and *Christ*, are not included in this list.)

8.3 Magic spells on the interpreted runic plates

Throughout this book I discuss the type of formula the inscriptions on the runic plates may be assigned to (see particularly section 1.4 in the introduction on exhortative, ritual and epic incantations as well as secret formulations).

The interpreted runic material consists predominantly of exhortative spells (with ritual and epic elements). These include Sigtuna plate 1, the Kvinneby plate, Solberga plates 1 and 2, the Järfälla plate and possibly also the Hallbjäns plate. The inscriptions on the Østermarie plate and perhaps also the Roskilde plate can be considered primarily as ritual spells. I consider the Högstena enchantment epic-ritual while Sigtuna plate 5 can be accounted a secret formulation. None of the remaining uninterpreted runic plates currently permits such a classification.

I loosely divide the interpreted plates into a further four groups: inscriptions with 1) words to dispel or ward off (which drive away some form of evil, with

⁴⁵¹ *drōttinn* ‘lord’ must be excluded here, as it refers to a troll.

meanings such as ‘flee away’); 2) protective words and phrases (e.g. ‘help-runes’, ‘help’, ‘may Thor protect him’); 3) words which both ward off and protect, and 4) wishes or phrases of desire. The inscriptions in this last group cannot quite be termed protective, especially in those cases where the aim was for example to compel love from someone; nor are they dispelling, and a separate group is therefore required. My corpus contains only two inscriptions which may express wishes, namely the Skørrebrovej and the Uppåkra plates. The first was previously considered lexical but lacking in interpretation; I identify some phrases of desire in this inscription, which may comprise wishes for a young couple, but unfortunately cannot be certain of this interpretation as the inscription is incomplete. The Uppåkra plate is in its turn too fragmentary and its interpretation therefore uncertain: the inscription may also comprise an exhortative love spell.

It should be observed that the delimitation between protective and dispelling words can in certain cases be somewhat vague, and that my interpretation of the Högstena plate may be considered to land outside these groups; for this reason it is not considered in Table 27 below. My interpretation of the Ladoga plate is also difficult to classify: its formulation is part protection, part wish. This and the Gorodišče plates are both excluded from Table 27.

My desire to avoid broad generalisations makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the structure of the magic spells in view of the uniqueness of each text. It can however be observed that the spells are constructed from certain ‘building blocks’, i.e. set expressions and phrases which in my opinion were transferrable and comprised part of the carver’s linguistic repertoire of spells. It may be supposed that the carver/enchanter could choose relatively freely from these to create an ultimately unique text for the individual client.

A structure for warding-off spells may be suspected in the few runic plate inscriptions of this type known today: the evil forces are first named or at least defined in some way (1), they are then driven away (2) and threatened or cursed (3). Some words of affirmation may then be uttered (4) as a confirmation of the result and some concluding words may be added (5). (Cf. Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981:190.)

The structure of the protective spells is more difficult to determine, but it is only in inscriptions with words of protection (which in two cases also contain dispelling words) that the recipient of the inscription is overtly named. It is also in these inscriptions that the carver explicitly states that he or she ‘carves’ runes as well as naming the type of runes which have been carved or the type of help or protection involved.

The two inscriptions which may express wishes (the plates from Skørrebrovej and Uppåkra) lack definite interpretation; for this reason I abstain from proposing any structure for this type.

8.4 The content of the inscriptions in relation to findplaces

My analysis of the findplaces in which the interpreted and uninterpreted runic plates were discovered divides these into two types: grave contexts and residential contexts. The analysis is based on my interpretations where these have been suggested or on the interpretations of other scholars if I accept these.

Even a rough division such as this provides interesting results (Table 27). It appears that all of the interpreted inscriptions in group 1 (i.e. with dispelling words) were found in graves (3 examples). The only inscription with possibly dispelling content (interpreted as such by Nordén) which does not derive from a burial context is Sigtuna plate 2. Nordén is however governed in his attempt at interpretation by the assumption that runic plates ought to contain such displacing inscriptions against revenants, and his interpretation can hardly be regarded as reliable. It is therefore not considered in the glossary above, nor in Table 27. It should finally be observed that the Högstena inscription defies categorisation according to my interpretation: I cannot determine whether it is protective or displacing, and I therefore exclude it from the table.

Four inscriptions are interpreted as containing words of protection. It must be noted here that three of these are fragmentary and may consequently have contained dispelling words in the parts which are now lost (the Østermarie plate, the Skänninge plate and Old Uppsala plate 1). One plate is encrypted and could therefore also contain displacing words (the Roskilde plate). A further three plates which have been interpreted as containing protective words are not considered in Table 27 as their interpretations cannot be considered certain (Gorodišče plates 1 and 2 and the Ladoga plate). It is therefore impossible to discount the possibility that some of these, or even all of them, may have been categorised as group 3 if our knowledge of the inscriptions had been more complete.

Table 27. Interpreted runic plates in relation to findplaces.

Interpreted inscriptions on runic plates	Burial context	Residential contexts					Un-known	Total	
		urban context			other				
		city	work shop	fort.	rural	un-specified			
Group 1: dispelling words	3							3	
Group 2: protective words		1			1	1	1	4	
Group 3: dispelling & protective words		1	2				1	4	
Group 4: wishes?		1					1	2	
Total	3	5			2		3	13	

The inscriptions containing both dispelling and protective words are Sigtuna plate 1, the Kvinneby plate and Solberga plates 1 and 2. Sigtuna plate 1 has received many diverse interpretations but it is the word *lyfia* which many have considered protective; the content of the inscription can otherwise be stated to be dispelling. The Kvinneby plate and Solberga plates 1 and 2 can be unproblematically interpreted as inscriptions with both protective and dispelling words. All of the inscriptions with a known findplace in this group derive from urban contexts while the find context of one plate is undetermined.

The situation can thus be summarised as follows: only one runic plate with dispelling words is known to derive from a burial context while plates from urban contexts contain protective and dispelling words. No runic plate whose inscription comprises exclusively dispelling words can be incontrovertibly stated to derive from an urban context although Sigtuna plate 1 is a strong candidate. It is nonetheless difficult to determine whether this situation reflects ‘reality’ or if it may partly result from the expectations governing interpretations.

It is also of interest to see the contexts in which the runes on the uninterpreted plates occur (Table 28). For this purpose, I roughly divide the runes into conventional and unconventional, as previously mentioned. Table 28 does not include Solberga plates 4 and 5 as these seem to contain only rune-like signs rather than runes. I also exclude the plates from Villberga and Leksand, which I nonetheless believe to be lexical, although I allow the Klinta plates to remain in the table.

Table 28. Uninterpreted runic plates in relation to findplaces.

Uninterpreted inscriptions on runic plates	Burial context	Residential contexts					Un-known	Total		
		urban context			other					
		city	work shop	fort.	rural	un-specified				
Group 1: conventional runes	5	1		2	1	1		10		
Group 2: unconventional runes		2					1	3		
Group 3: conventional & unconventional runes	2	2		2		3	1	10		
Total	7	14					2	23		

It is interesting to note that the majority of the uninterpreted runic plates are carved with conventional runes (group 1 with 10 examples). It may further be observed that runic plates comprising exclusively unconventional runes (group 2) do not occur in burial contexts and on the whole are rare (only three examples). Runic plates with both conventional and unconventional runes (group 3) are encountered in both burial contexts and urban contexts but prevail in the

latter. This situation suggests that it is time to re-examine the common assumption that the primary aim of most of the runic plates was not to communicate a linguistic message.

According to my investigation, the number of interpreted runic inscriptions is still somewhat lower than the number of uninterpreted ones (22 to 24, if the Villberga plate, Klinta plate 1 and the Leksand plate are included amongst the interpreted), although this does not mean that the non-lexical runic plates actually dominate. If one excludes from the 24 uninterpreted runic plates those which are too fragmentary to be interpreted, as well as the plates which for phonological reasons can be considered interpretable and the plates which seem to be encrypted (e.g. those with both punctuation marks and conventional runes), the number of uninterpreted plates would be no more than eight. It is then quite possible that lexical runic plates from the Viking Age occur to the same extent as non-lexical ones, or rather even more often than these.

The overview further shows that the uninterpreted plates consist only in three cases exclusively of unconventional runes, and that burial contexts most often yield runic plates with conventional runes. This contradicts the expectations based on the previously mentioned assumptions that runic plates are connected to grave magic and contain obscure magical runic signs. This leads to a concluding discussion on the status of the runes on the runic plates and whether they, to force a comparison, are components of a writing system or largely magical signs devoid of linguistic meaning.

8.5 The runes of the plates: magical symbols or non-magical writing signs?

The status of the runes as magical symbols has become an almost toxic topic today, with completely contradictory positions as well as essentially different ways of defending these.⁴⁵² Particularly difficult to determine in this regard is the status of runes in the older runic inscriptions. I nonetheless choose to focus only on the material from the Viking Age in what follows.

The inscriptions on the runic plates predominantly contain runes which are easily read or can be read after decryption. Despite slightly less than half of the known inscriptions being currently interpretable, I am convinced by my investigation that the primary function of these runes was to reproduce the linguistic messages which characterised the plates as powerful magical objects. Despite the nature of the objects, the runes themselves served only as regular writing symbols.

As is clear from Table 17 above, some runic plates nonetheless contain a number of unconventional runes, the function of which is perhaps not linguis-

⁴⁵² The subject is discussed and summarised at length in the works of Düwel (1992, 1997 and 2008:206–211).

tic. It is these runes in particular which most often inspire explanations of runic magic, i.e. claims that the runes themselves could have been regarded as magical symbols which imbued inscriptions with magical power not through conveying the power of the word but in their character of runic symbols (for more of this discussion see Barnes 2012:191–194). Such a magical character is nonetheless in the Viking Age doubtless secondary to the purely linguistic function of the runes. It may be possible to find support in runic inscriptions and early Icelandic literature (see Dillmann 1995) for the magical function of some runes, such as runic **p**. In this case it is also possible that some of the runes on the plates could be understood to convey magical properties or concepts. The unconventional runes on Sigtuna plate 5, which most often have doubled mainstaves and which seem fundamentally evocative of the rune **p**, were probably carved as such symbolic characters rather than as encrypted writing signs.

In conclusion, the magical power of the runic plates lies primarily in the linguistic message. This could then be carved with runes acting either as properties of a writing system or as symbolic of magical words and concepts. One may nevertheless observe that the latter means of communicating linguistically magical messages, i.e. via runes as symbols, is not particularly common; and despite what has been assumed in earlier scholarship, it was far from predominant on the Viking-Age runic plates.

8.6 Final words

It may be regarded as incontrovertible that the inscriptions on runic plates belong to the genre of magical formulas. It is nonetheless surprising that secret formulas are rare on the Viking-Age runic plates, and that the only certain example is undated (Sigtuna plate 5). We thus encounter no futhark inscriptions, palindromes or inscriptions comprising specifically magical words (cf. the use in older inscriptions of charm words such as **alu** and **laukar**). The secret formulas emerged as a genre during the proto-Scandinavian period under the influence of Oriental magic and the genre regained popularity under the influence of continental magic during the Middle Ages. The content of the Viking-Age runic plates may thus have strong roots in indigenous traditions. The plates therefore comprise a unique source of research into magical thought in Scandinavia.

Summary

This doctoral dissertation is a monographic study of 46 Viking-Age runic plates. The aim is to read and interpret as far as possible the inscriptions on these plates in order to as clearly as practicable depict the inscriptional genre of *Viking-Age runic plates*.

The term *runic plate* covers a large number of diverse non-monumental objects. For the purposes of this dissertation I therefore narrow the term and in my corpus include only objects which are made of metal, are functionally flat (i.e. have only two writing surfaces), contain runes or rune-like lines and evidence no clear everyday function. In this way a more typologically homogenous group of magical objects is obtained.

The dissertation comprises eight chapters. The chapters divide the runic plates according to principles of geography (Swedish, Danish and non-Scandinavian objects, respectively), content (interpreted and uninterpreted inscriptions), and typology (Type A ‘pendants’, Type B ‘non-pendants’ and Type C ‘rolled or folded plates’). I choose to deal first with the Swedish runic plates, since it is in Sweden that the earliest runic plates (eighth to tenth-century) have been found, while all the Danish runic plates date from the eleventh to the twelfth century. The presentation thus approaches a chronological survey, facilitating understanding of the development of this inscriptional type.

The dissertation is complemented by a richly illustrated catalogue. The catalogue, which is available only in Swedish, contains transliterations of the inscriptions on the runic plates as well as reports on the reading of the runic plates I have personally examined. The runic plates are here arranged geographically by country and province; they are listed alphabetically in each geographical unit. The catalogue can be downloaded from the link <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-383584>>

The dissertation further contains one appendix, an alphabetical list of all the runic plates. Further relevant information beyond reading and interpretation is also provided here; there are also references to the pages in the main text and the catalogue where each individual plate is discussed.

Chapter 1 comprises an introduction, part of which deals with the genre of *magical formulas*, which in line with Ohrt’s model (1917:1–58) are divided into exhortative, ritual, epic and secret formulas. It also provides a comprehensive presentation of the runic plate material.

The presentation of the material shows that Type A was more popular than Type B in the Viking Age (if the plates we have today are regarded as representative). We further see that it is among the pendants that examples of re-

paired plates are found (i.e. the Ladoga plate and possibly Lund plate 1) as well as plates which may have been re-used (Solberga plate 3).

The plates are usually made of bronze or copper. It should be noted, however, that the distinction between these is somewhat arbitrary; as far as I am aware, no chemical analyses of the plates have been made, so that conclusions as to type of material are based on a more or less subjective impression of its appearance. That said, the material appears to indicate that bronze and copper were used to almost the same extent for the production of plates. Bronze was however used somewhat more often in the early Viking Age while the number of copper plates seems to increase towards the end of the period. Lead was for some reason considered unsuitable for the production of runic amulets during the Viking Age. Runic lead plates did however become popular during the Middle Ages, presumably under continental influence. It seems that silver was similarly regarded as unsuitable (if the silver amulets were not recast due to the value of the material).

The chronological distribution of the Viking-Age runic plates indicates a point of particular interest, namely that the earliest plates come from Gotland and the Mälär-valley in what is today Sweden. This suggests that even the early Russian plates from Staraja Ladoga and Rjurikovo Gorodišče, which have been dated to the tenth century (but which could also be older), were a product of East Scandinavia which the Vikings brought with them to Rus'. This idea is confirmed later in the analysis where we find typological and runographic similarities between the runic plates from the Mälär area and from Rus'.

To enable me to consider the find circumstances of the runic plates, I have divided these into two crude types: finds from burial and residential contexts. The latter have been further divided in broad terms into urban areas and other environments. Consideration of the find areas shows that only 13 runic plates were found in graves while 27 were found in residential contexts. This contradicts the general assumption that Viking-Age runic plates are usually found in graves. This assumption has its roots in Arthur Nordén's (1943:186 f.) conviction that runic plates usually comprised amulets against revenants, but it has been accepted by many other researchers. The number of Viking-Age grave plates is however hardly negligible. Four of the 13 plates in this category belong to Type A while five are of Type B. It cannot thus be maintained that either Type A or Type B has any particular connection with graves. It is however striking that all the runic plates of undeniable C-type come from burials. It has sometimes been assumed that the folding of the runic plate was associated with the ritual acts performed in connection with the burial (Nordén 1943:188; Svärdström 1969a:36); this assumption is supported in my corpus.

In three cases of burials containing skeletons, the plates were placed on the bodies, while in two cases we have remarkable tombs containing no skeletal remains. It is tempting to suppose that the latter two cases might represent symbolic burials. It is in any case possible that both the folding of the plates as well as their placement in the graves reflect ritual acts.

As concerns the 27 runic plates from residential contexts, they are often finds from metal detecting in connection with archaeological investigations of Viking-Age and early mediaeval settlement areas. Sometimes, however, more information is forthcoming. It is for example established that one runic plate was found in the ruins of a building with a presumably cultic or mercantile function (The Ladoga plate), two plates were found in an artisan area (Solberga plates 1 and 2), while two plates were found in a military area at the Garrison on Birka. It is however often difficult to establish with any degree of certainty the purpose of a construction, and a great number of plates have been found in disturbed culture layers of Viking-Age and early mediaeval settlements. In the division between urban areas and the rest, the former clearly dominate, which is hardly a surprise. The concentration of both people with knowledge of runes and those in need of runic magic must have been greater in cities than in rural areas. It should however be noted that the circumstances of preservation and examination could also have an impact here.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the comparative material. To simplify matters, in the introduction I divide the runes on the plates into two types: conventional and unconventional. By conventional I mean Viking-Age short-twig and long-branch runes. The corpus includes, however, a large number of plates whose inscriptions contain or are thought to contain characters other than these, such as for example staveless runes, older runes, balanced runes (which I call balanced runes), runes with non-graphemic branches and so on. These runes are designated as unconventional in this work. In order to provide more reliable readings of the runic plates containing such runes, this chapter discusses comparable Viking-Age runic inscriptions with similar divergent characters. Unlike the plates, these inscriptions have been reliably read and interpreted. I do not provide a comprehensive discussion of all the relevant material but simply aim to distinguish what is certain from what is not.

I begin by discussing older runes in younger runic inscriptions. The result of my investigation shows that the older runes **H**, **A** and **M** are retained in younger transitional inscriptions but that we lack reliable evidence of **G**, **D** and **W** during the transitional period. Older runes can still be used in younger inscriptions, either in separate systems of code or as ideographs.

I further discuss staveless runes and confirm that questions remain surrounding their use. I also discuss bind-runers and coordinate runes and confirm that their use is well attested as a means of encryption on both runic stones and non-monumental objects during the Viking and Middle Ages.

I suggest the label 'runes with non-graphemic branches' and use it for runes which have been provided with additional lines devoid of linguistic meaning used to: 1) obscure the content of the inscription: 'encrypting non-graphemic branches', 2) give the rune or inscription extra magical power: 'amplifying non-graphemic branches', 3) decorate the rune: 'decorative non-graphemic

branches'. Instances of all three types are difficult to identify unequivocally as well as to distinguish from each other, as I discuss in brief.

In this chapter, I suggest the new label 'balanced runes' for those unconventional runes which have previously been considered to mirror themselves ('mirror runes'), since I can show that the principle behind the construction of the runes is not mirroring but balance. The label 'mirror runes' is misleading for another reason: the literature on different systems of writing and code reserves the label 'mirror' (as in 'mirror writing') for writing signs which change course and continue in a different direction (in runology these would be called *inverted runes*).

To explain how the principal works, I divide the runes into three groups: runes which lack balance I call *unbalanced* (Ÿ), runes with balanced sides *semibalanced* (Ŷ), and the runes which are completely balanced I call *fully-balanced* (X̥). The crucial element for complete balance in a rune is firstly, that it shows symmetry between its left and right side, and secondly that it shows symmetry between its upper and lower component (top and base). A rune balanced on its left and right side as well as between its upper and lower components automatically places its focal point in the middle. When carvers balance their runes, they take only one step towards balance (and in this system never two), and the steps are prioritised in exactly this order. If we imagine a rune which lacks balance between both the right and left side and between the upper and lower component and thus does not have its focal point in the middle (Ÿ), the form of balance is created by taking a single step and balancing the rune's right and left side (Ŷ). If however a rune already has balance between the sides, but not between the upper and lower component (Ŷ), and therefore does not have a focal point in the middle, its upper and lower components will be balanced (X̥). If a rune is balanced both between sides and components, it does not need to – and cannot – be balanced (X̥).

I suggest the label 'rune-like signs' should be used sparingly. The term *rune-like signs* usually refers to characters which are intended to resemble runes but which are not runes. I therefore prefer to identify *runiforms*. This excludes carvings which are simply vaguely rune-like, instead referring to signs that resemble runes but which simultaneously cannot be identified as conventional or unconventional runes. Principles of writing that are unfamiliar to us might lie behind these runiforms.

Chapter 3 considers Swedish Type-A interpreted runic plates: the Hallbjäns plate, Sigtuna plate 1, the Kvinneby plate and Solberga plates 1 and 2. I discuss previous readings and interpretations, investigate earlier methods of interpretation and suggest my own transliterations of these runic plates. For all except the Hallbjäns plate I also propose new interpretations. The suggested interpretations are all based on the new readings found in the catalogue.

My reading of Sigtuna plate 1 differs in two places from earlier ones. The

most significant discovery is my identification of a staveless rune **f** in the last line of the inscription. I suggest a new interpretation of the first and final lines of the inscription which runs as follows:

Wound-fever's troll, lord of trolls!
 You flee now! Found is (the wound-fever's troll, lord of trolls ...)
 May three torments take you, wolf, may nine needs take you!
 The wolf takes these (torments and needs) and with these the wolf remains calm. Use the magic charm!

The text is thus a magical formula with several elements which are characteristic of a typical exhortative formula: 1) a direct order to a supernatural creature, which is named in several ways in order to drive it away; 2) a partly three-fold repetition of these names ('wolf' is repeated three times, while 'wound-fever's troll, lord of trolls' in my new interpretation is repeated innumerable times). It is hardly self-evident that the aim of the curse is to drive away a sickness demon but any other interpretation is scarcely more likely. I date the inscription to the first half of the eleventh century.

My reading of the Kvinneby plate differs from previous ones in several places, of which the most important are the introductory cryptic runes and the inscription's dotted runes. I agree with Börje Westlund's reading of the encrypted introductory runes but choose different, more methodical means of justification. My interpretation of the inscription is:

Here I carve (may I carve/carved) help for you, Bove, with complete assistance. Fire is safe for you (known to you), (the fire which) took all evil away from Bove. May Thor protect him with the hammer which came from the sea. Flee from the evil one! Magic (evil) achieves nothing with Bove. Gods are under him and over him.

I believe the spell is an exhortative protection formula with ritual and narrative elements. The naming of both the fire and the hammer may reflect a ritual act which could be performed in conjunction with the carving. I also show the connection between fire on the one hand and the god Thor on the other. I interpret the image of the fish as a reminder of Thor's strength and magical power and draw attention to spells dealing with fire-fish in Finnish-Karelian mythology which have a clear connection with a mythological figure, 'the heavenly smith'. The dating of the Kvinneby plate must remain broad, circa 1000–1130.

New readings are provided for the introductory cryptic runes of plates 1 and 2 from Solberga. I also try to interpret the introduction although my attempt must be characterised as uncertain. I further suggest interpretations of additional problematic places in the inscription. The interpretation of Solberga plate 1 runs:

Keep this quiet: I remember/name enough (that I) ... with help released (= delivered) (?). And may Christ and Saint Mary help you, Oluv! The helping-woman (= midwife) binds with a ring and marks/signs with healing signs. Perverse giant and howling troll, go from you, Oluv!

Solberga plate 2 is interpreted as follows:

I carve (or: mark with signs) the three-headed troll, covered with crushed earth, from the man's woman. May (I) enchant him there, destroy (him)! His head pained him (when it) disappeared into the fire(?).

We thus have in both cases an exhortative magical formula with ritual elements. The archaeological dating of the Solberga plates corresponds to the runological dating.

Chapter 4 discusses interpreted Swedish runic plates of Type B as well as fragmentary plates. As with the previous chapter, I discuss earlier readings and interpretations. I also suggest interpretations of the Ulvsunda plate, the Järfälla plate and the Högstena plate which are similarly based on new readings as found in the catalogue. The most radical change in interpretation concerns the inscription on the Högstena plate, which I read as follows:

Through/With the enchanting one(s), through the one(s) destined for the gallows, through the swinging one(s), through the ending [i.e. killing] one(s), through the offering one(s), through the one(s) performing magic, through the travelling one(s), through the flying one(s). The funeral feast [grave-ale] also gives nourishment with the help of the dead/after death.

The inscription on the Högstena plate may have been connected to a rite involving the hanging of people or animals and although the reason for this cannot now be determined, the theme of sacrifice is clearly present in the inscription. The text that I identify can no longer be considered (as previously) a warding-off formula. To some extent it approaches an epic formulation describing a certain sequence of events. It also resembles ritual formulas providing instructions for a particular rite. I therefore, with some reservation, suggest classifying this formula as epic-ritual.

This chapter also includes a discussion of two problematic runic plates with inscriptions not conclusively identified as being in either Latin or runic Swedish. These are Vassunda plate 3 and Sigtuna plate 2. The result of my investigation is that the inscription on the Vassunda plate is lexical and its inscription is composed in runic Swedish. The inscription on Sigtuna plate 2 is also lexical but may contain a Latin or rather, perhaps, pseudo-Latin formulation.

Chapter 5 discusses 22 uninterpreted Swedish runic plates. My investigation shows that far from all the uninterpreted plates are definitely non-lexical. I find no reason to doubt the non-lexicity of eight of these: Björkö plate 2, Solberga plates 3, 4 and 5, and Sigtuna 3, 5, 6 and 7. The number of uninterpreted inscriptions which may be lexical is thus 14 in my view. I further question whether the plates from Villberga and Östra Aros evidence letter magic and suggest interpretations of the plates from Villberga and Leksand.

Chapter 6 treats the eight Danish runic plates in the corpus. The investigation shows that half of these are unquestionably lexical. It is not possible to unequivocally prove that the other half are non-lexical because they are either too

fragmentary or evidence uncertain readings. Results of the investigation include more reliable readings for a number of the plates (these are provided in the catalogue) as well as new interpretations proposed for the plates from Roskilde and Skørrebrovej respectively.

Chapter 7 considers four runic plates found outside of the Scandinavian countries. A new reading is given of the Deerness plate from Orkney, and I argue that it is not justified to summarily dismiss the plate's inscription as non-lexical. The Gorodišče plates are also given a new reading but no corresponding interpretation. I believe that the plates from Gorodišče are encrypted with balanced runes, older runes of the same type as on the Rök stone as well as one or two coordinate runes. I am strongly inclined to dismiss the idea that this inscription contains runes with non-graphemic staves. Finally, a new reading is provided for the Ladoga plate. I discuss the lexemes which may occur in the inscription but give no overall interpretation.

Chapter 8 consists of a summary of all the certain runic forms (Tables 8–18) and words which occur in the corpus of runic plates (Tables 9–26). In general it can be stated that most of the runic plates are carved on two sides and that more than half of them have more than two lines of text. Twenty-three plates are carved with conventional runes (long-branch and short-twig runes); sixteen plates evidence both conventional and unconventional runes (cryptic runes and rune-like signs) while five plates are carved entirely in unconventional runes. Two runic plates have carvings consisting of rune-like lines.

The inscriptions typically run from left to right on the 28 runic plates whose reading order can be established. Three plates show a more unusual reading order, however (plate 1 from Lund, and the plates from Hallbjäns and Eketorp).

There is no word division on the runic plates, via either punctuation marks or spacing, but there are markers which open or close sentences as well as in one case indicating a single word loaded with meaning (*sārriða* 'wound-fever' on Sigtuna plate 1). It is interesting to note that the punctuation marks most often take the form of a cross or consist of straight vertical lines.

The forms of runes on metal plates differ for obvious reasons from those carved in stone: metal is easy to inscribe and carvers require neither helpers nor any special workplaces or tools. The branches of the runes **f**, **k**, **m** and **ᚱ** are more often straight when found on metal plates rather than on runestones; the bows of the runes **þ** and **b** are furthermore more often angular on plates than on runestones. This is in all probability related to the properties of the material. The variation in rune-forms is also much greater than that observable on runestones.

There are very few dotted runes on plates, which might be due to the fact that dots are more difficult to either carve or discern on small plates than on

runestones. Bind-runes, conversely, occur much more frequently than on runestones, but this is probably a consequence of their being used to complicate the reading rather than to correct errors. Principles of cryptography frequently occur in combination on the plates, so that bind-runes, for example, can occur together with balanced runes, and coordinate runes on the same plate as staveless runes.

Short-twig rune-forms are rare on the plates: they are completely outnumbered by long-branch runes, being found on only seven plates.

The interpretations of the plates Vassunda 3, Villberga and Leksand are not included in the dictionary in Chapter 8 as I consider them too uncertain. For the same reason I also exclude my suggested interpretation of the introduction of Solberga plate 1. I do, however, include some words from the plates from Skørrebrovej and Ladoga.

The dictionary is arranged according to word class (names, other nouns, pronouns, adjectives and present participles, adverbs, numbers, verbs including past participles, and in a last group prepositions, particles and conjunctions). The entries are listed alphabetically within these groups. Examples from both runic Swedish and runic Danish are designated in Table 19–Table 26 as runic Scandinavian. It is immediately obvious that certain types of words occur more frequently than others in the vocabulary of the runic plates, and that for example there is a large number of verbs with the meaning ‘get, acquire’, ‘help’, ‘practise magic’, ‘carve, make signs’, ‘damage, destroy’ as well as a great number of verbs (including present participles) which designate physical movement from one location to another. Verbs in the present (indicative or subjunctive) or the imperative occur much more often than verbs in the simple past. The nouns on the runic plates can be grouped relatively easily according to theme, such as for example ‘help and healing’, ‘injury and malevolent magic’ or descriptions of different types of runes. The vocabulary on runic plates differs markedly from that on runestones, although of course some of the words on the plates are evidenced on runestones.

The presence of women is more substantial than that of men in the inscriptions, if we restrict ourselves to the use of nouns referring to people: this is shown by words such as *biargguma* ‘helping woman (midwife)’, *kona* ‘woman’ (twice) and *mōðir* ‘mother’. The only noun which unequivocally refers to a man is *maðr* ‘man’ in the expression *manns konu* ‘man’s woman’ on Solberga plate 2. It is thus used in a construction which describes a woman. Consideration of personal pronouns shows that the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ (subject and object) dominate. The pronouns ‘he, him’ are frequent, being used four times, but only in two cases to refer to a man, Bove; two usages instead refer to trolls. In this context, one might expect to encounter more female names than male ones in the inscriptions; instead, however, the names which are certain reflect the same image of Viking society as the Viking-Age stone runic inscriptions, with four female and six male names. (The only two certain examples of divine names – *Thor* and *Christ* – are not included in this calculation. With their

inclusion we arrive at twice as many male names as female ones on the runic plates.)

Throughout the dissertation I discuss the type of formula to which the inscriptions on the runic plates belong. The interpreted runic material consists predominantly of exhortative magic formulas (with ritual or epic elements). This grouping includes Sigtuna plate 1, the Kvinneby plate, Solberga plates 1 and 2, the Järfälla plate and possibly also the plate from Hallbjäns. To the primarily ritual formulas belong the inscriptions on the plates from Østermarie and possibly also Roskilde. I am inclined to place the Högstena incantation with the epic-ritual formulas. Sigtuna plate 5 can be grouped with the secret formulas.

I further divide (in Table 27) the interpreted plates into four groups: inscriptions with 1) dispelling words (which drive away some form of evil, as for example 'fly away'); 2) protective words and phrases (e.g. 'help-runes', 'help', 'May Thor protect him'); 3) words which both dispel and protect, and 4) wishes or phrases of desire. It should be pointed out that the distinction between words which protect or ward off can in some cases be rather vague, and that my interpretation of the Högstena plate might be considered to fall somewhat outside of these groupings.

In order to clarify the find circumstances of the interpreted and uninterpreted inscriptions, I have, as mentioned above, roughly divided these into two types: burial contexts and residential contexts. The situation can be summarised as follows: from the graves, only runic plates with dispelling words are known, while plates from urban areas contain both protective and dispelling words. No runic plate whose inscription contains only dispelling words can be definitely stated to derive from an urban area, although Sigtuna plate 1 is a strong candidate. It is, however, difficult to determine whether this situation reflects 'reality' or if it is partly the result of the expectations guiding the interpretations.

In this chapter I try to draw some conclusions about the structure of the magic formula. While I do not want to generalise too much on the basis of a relatively small sample, it can be noted that the formulas appear to be constructed with certain 'building blocks': set phrases and expressions which in my opinion were interchangeable and which comprised part of the carver's linguistic repertoire of magic formulas. The carver or enchanter could without doubt choose relatively freely from these to create an ultimately unique textual formula for the individual client.

The structure of the dispelling formulas can be glimpsed in the few runic plate inscriptions evidencing these which are known today: the evil forces are first named, or at least defined (1), they are then driven off (2) and threatened or cursed (3). Thereafter may follow some words of reinforcement (4) which confirm the results, sometimes followed by further concluding words (5).

The structure of the protective formulas is more difficult to apprehend, but it is only in inscriptions with words of protection (which in two cases also have warding-off words) that the beneficiary of the inscription is named. It is also in

these inscriptions that the carver explicitly states that he or she ‘carves’ or ‘carved’ runes and names the type of runes which have been carved or the type of help or protection which is forthcoming.

As the two inscriptions in the corpus which (might) express wishes are both uncertain, I choose not to suggest any structure for this type.

The possible relationship of uninterpreted inscriptions to their find circumstances is shown in Table 28. It is interesting to observe that most of the uninterpreted runic plates are carved with conventional runes (group 1). It is also significant that plates comprising exclusively unconventional runes (group 2) do not occur in graves and on the whole are rare (only three examples). Runic plates with both conventional and unconventional runes (group 3) are found in both graves and urban areas but mainly in the latter. The situation suggests that it might be time to call yet another popular assumption into question, namely that the primary aim of most of the runic plates was not the conveyance of a linguistic message. The number of interpreted runic plates is undeniably lower than the number of uninterpreted ones (22 to 24, if the plates from Villberga, Klinta 1 and Leksand are included among the former group), but this does not necessarily imply that the non-linguistic runic plates dominate. If one excludes from the 24 uninterpreted runic plates those which are too fragmentary for interpretation, as well as those which for phonotactic reasons appear to be interpretable and those which seem to be encrypted (e.g. those with both punctuation marks and conventional runes), the number of uninterpreted inscriptions falls to eight. It is thus completely possible that lexical runic plates from the Viking Age have been found to the same extent as non-lexical ones, possibly even more frequently.

The survey further shows that the uninterpreted inscriptions consist exclusively of unconventional runes in only three cases, while the runic plates from graves most often utilise conventional runes. This contradicts the expectations based on the assumptions mentioned above that runic plates are linked to grave magic and contain obscure runic signs of ‘heathen magic’.

In conclusion, I briefly discuss the status of the runes on runic plates and whether they comprise part of a writing system or are more likely to be magical signs devoid of linguistic meaning. The inscriptions on the runic plates for the most part evidence runes which can easily be read, or which can be read after decryption. Despite the fact that slightly fewer than half of the known inscriptions can currently be interpreted, my investigation convinces me that the primary function of the runes on the plates was to convey the linguistic messages which made the runic plates what they were in the eyes of contemporary Scandinavians, namely powerful magical objects. The runes themselves, however, functioned in these cases only as ordinary writing signs.

Bibliography

Abbreviations of archival institutions and bibliographical references

ÁBM = Magnússon, Ásgeir Blöndal.

ANF = *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*. 1888 ff., Lund.

ARL = Archaeological Research Laboratory of the Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University.

AST1 = Nordén 1943.

ATA = Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet, Riksantikvarieämbetet, Stockholm = Antiquarian Topographical Archives, Swedish National Heritage Board, Stockholm.

ATA + dnr = *diarenummer* 'registration number' in ATA.

AUD = *Arkæologiske Udgravninger i Danmark*. 1985–2002, Copenhagen.

BN = Nilsson 1973.

Bo = runic inscriptions from Bohuslän, Sweden.

[Bo] KJ + number = runic inscription in Krause & Jankuhn 1966.

[Bo] Peterson = Peterson 1992.

D = runic inscriptions from Dalarna, Sweden.

[D] Fv = *Fornvännan*.

DFU = Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala, Realkatalogen = Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research, Uppsala, Classified catalogue.

DK = Runic Database *Danske Runeindskrifter*, see internet sources.

DLM = *Den ljsa medeltiden. Studier tillägnade Aron Andersson*. 1984, Stockholm. (Studies 4.)

DR + number = runic inscription from Denmark, see number in *DRI*.

DRI = *Danmarks runeindskrifter*. Ed. Lis Jacobsen & al. 1 = Text. 2 = Atlas. Register. 1941–42, Copenhagen.

[DR] AUD + year and page = *AUD*.

[DR] DK + province and number = see DK among internet sources.

[DR] EM85 + page = Moltke, 1985.

[DR] Fv + year and page = *Fornvännan*.

[DR] IK + number = *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit*. Ikonographischer Katalog 1–3. Ed. Karl Hauck. 1985–89, Münster. (Münster Mittelalter-Schriften.)

[DR] NOR + year and page = *NOR*.

[DR] Til + number = Tillæg ('Addition') in *DRI*, pp. 582–94.

E + number = runic inscription from England, see Barnes & Page 2006.

[E] DR + number = number in *DRI*.

FMIS = Riksantikvarieämbetets nationella fornminnesinformationssystem, = The Swedish National Heritage Board's information catalogue for ancient sites and monuments, see internet sources.

G + number = runic inscription from Gotland, see number in *GR*.

GR + number = runic inscription from Greenland, see number in Olsen 1949.

GR = *Gotlands runinskrifter* 1–2. Elias Wessén, Sven B. F. Jansson & Elisabeth Svärdström. 1962–78, Stockholm. (*SRI* 11–12.)

GR 3 = see internet sources.

- Gs + number = runic inscription from Gästrikland, see number in *GsR*.
GsR = *Gästriklands runinskrifter*. Sven B. F. Jansson. 1981, Stockholm. (*SRI* 15:1.)
 Hs + number = runic inscription from Hälsingland, see number in Åhlén 1994.
IJGLSA = *Interdisciplinary Journal for Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis*. 1996 ff., Berkeley.
 IM = runic inscription from Isle of Man.
 [IM] MM = Manx Museum.
 IR + number = runic inscription from Ireland, see number in Barnes & al. 1997.
 KJ = runic inscription in Krause & Jankuhn 1966.
KLNM = *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid från vikingatid till reformationstid* 1–22. 1956–78, Copenhagen.
 KVHAA = Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien = The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities.
 N + number = runic inscription from Norway, see number in *NlyR*.
 N A + number = unpublished runic inscription from Norway, see number in Runic Archives (Museum of Cultural History, Oslo).
 N B + number = unpublished runic inscription from Bergen in Norway, see number in Runic Archives (Museum of Cultural History, Oslo).
 [N] KJ + number = runic inscription in Krause & Jankuhn 1966.
NE = *Nationalencyklopedin. Ett uppslagsverk på vetenskaplig grund utarbetat på initiativ av Statens kulturråd*. 1–20. 1989–96, Höganäs.
NGL = *Norges gamle love indtil 1387*. See Hertzberg & Storm.
NHM = *Novgorods statliga historiska museum* = Novgorod State Historical Museum.
NlyR = *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*. Utg. for Kjeldeskriftfondet. 1–. 1941 ff., Oslo. (Norges indskrifter indtil reformationen. Afd. 2.)
NlæR = *Norges indskrifter med de ældre runer*. Udg. for det Norske historiske kildeskriftfond ved Sophus Bugge & Magnus Olsen. 1–3. 1891–1924. Christiania. (Norges indskrifter indtil reformationen. Afd. 1.)
 NKM = Nationalmuseet i København = National Museum of Denmark.
NoB = *Namn och bygd. Tidskrift för nordisk ortnamnsforskning*. 1913 ff., Uppsala.
NOR = *Nytt om runer. Meldingsblad om runeforskning* 1–. 1986–2004, Oslo.
NRL = Peterson 2007.
 Nä + number = runic inscription from Närke, Sweden, see number in *NäR*.
NäR = *Närkes runinskrifter*. Sven B. F. Jansson. 1975 Stockholm. (*SRI* 14:1.)
ONP = *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog*. See internet sources.
 Or + number = runic inscription from Orkney, see number in Barnes & Page 2006.
 Or Barnes + number = runic inscription from Maeshowe, Orkney, see number in Barnes 1994a.
 RAÄ = Riksantikvarieämbetet = Swedish National Heritage Board.
 RAÄ + Parish name + number = in RAÄ's Register of Antiquities (FMIS).
 RU Melnikova + year and page = Mel'nikova 2001.
SAOB = *Ordbok över svenska språket*. Utg. av Svenska akademien. 1898 ff., Lund.
SAS = *Studia anthroponymica Scandinavica. Tidskrift för nordisk personnamnsforskning*. 1983 ff., Uppsala.
 Sc + number = runic inscription from Scotland, see number in Barnes & Page 2006.
 SF = Sigtuna fornhem = Sigtuna Museum.
 Sh + number = runic inscription from Shetland, see number in Barnes & Page 2006.
 SHM = Statens historiska museum = The Swedish History Museum.
 Sl + number = runic inscription from Sigtuna, see 'Sl' under internet sources.
 Sm + number = runic inscription from Småland, see number in *SmR*.
SmR = *Smålands runinskrifter*. Ragnar Kinander. 1935–61, Stockholm. (*SRI* 4.)
SOS = *Språk och stil. Tidskrift för svensk språkforskning*. 1–. 1992 ff., Uppsala.

SRD = Samnordisk runtextdatabas = Scandinavian Runic Text Database. See internet sources.

SRI = *Sveriges runinskrifter*. Utg. av KVHAA. 1–. 1900 ff., Stockholm.

Sö + number = runic inscription from Södermanland, see number in *SöR*.

SöR = *Södermanlands runinskrifter*. Erik Brate & Elias Wessén. 1924–36, Stockholm. (*SRI* 3.)

U + number = runic inscription from Uppland, see number in *UR*.

[U] ANF + year and page = *ANF*.

[U] AST1 + year and page = Nordén 1943.

[U] ATA + number = *ATA*.

[U] DLM = *DLM*.

[U] FJÖLNIR + year and page = *Fjölnir*.

[U] FV + year and page = *Fornvännen*.

[U] NOR + year and page = *NOR*.

[U] Uppl + year and page = Svärdström 1969a.

UUB = Uppsala universitets bibliotek. (Uppsala University Library.)

UR = *Upplands runinskrifter*. Elias Wessén & Sven B. F. Jansson. 1940–58, Stockholm. (*SRI* 6–9.)

UV Öst = See ‘Samla’ under internet sources.

Vg + number = runic inscription from Västergötland, see number in *VgR*.

[Vg] Fv + year and page = *Fornvännen*.

VgR = *Västergötlands runinskrifter*. Hugo Jungner & Elisabeth Svärdström. 1940–70, Stockholm. (*SRI* 5.)

Vr + number = runic inscription from Värmland, see number in *VrR*.

VrR = *Värmlands runinskrifter*. Sven B. F. Jansson. 1978, Stockholm. (*SRI* 14:2.)

Vs + number = runic inscription from Västmanland, see number in *VsR*.

VsR = *Västmanlands runinskrifter*. Sven B. F. Jansson. 1964, Stockholm. (*SRI* 13.)

Ög + number = runic inscription from Östergötland, see number in *ÖgR*.

[Ög] NOR + year and page = *NOR*.

[Ög] UVÖst + year and page = UV Öst.

ÖgR = *Östergötlands runinskrifter*. Erik Brate. 1911–1918, Stockholm. (*SRI* 2.)

Öl + number = runic inscription from Öland, see number in *ÖlR*.

[Öl] ATA + number = *ATA*.

[Öl] BN + number = see Nilsson 1973.

[Öl] Fv + year and page = see *Fornvännen*.

[Öl] Köping + number = Owe 2002.

[Öl] SAS + year and page = see *SAS*.

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Skaldic Project = Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: <http://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php>
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Appendix 1. Collected information on runic plates

This appendix provides navigational help for the main text and catalogue and presents the most important information about each individual plate. The names of the runic plates are listed alphabetically.

Each plate is listed with its signature in SRD and, where relevant, in DK as well as its dating, year and place of discovery, and archaeological and find context. Find contexts are roughly subdivided into burial contexts (cemeteries, graves) and domestic contexts. These latter can in their turn be roughly divided into urban and other contexts. The archaeological context is provided where available: many finds from metal detectors lack such a context, although this may be known if the detecting was undertaken in a Viking-Age domestic context, for example. In relevant cases, the site number in the register of RAÄ (see FMIS under internet sources) is also provided.

I note the form of the plate (Type A, B, C or fragmentary), its material (bronze, copper, silver or unspecified copper alloy) and size. No readings or interpretations of the inscriptions are provided here; these can instead be found either in the main text or the catalogue. It is however noted whether the runic plate has been interpreted or not. It is further recorded if the plate has been interpreted in the current work for the first time. The reading order of the inscription is provided where possible, e.g. *straightforward reading order* (from left to right, top to bottom or bottom to top) or *boustrophedon*. The appendix contains information on the runes and punctuation marks found on the plates. The runes are roughly subdivided into conventional (long-branch or short-twig runes) and unconventional (e.g. balanced runes, staveless runes or coordinate runes, see the definitions in Chapter 2, sections 2.1–2.7). It is also noted whether dotted runes or conventional bind-runes occur. I further remark on whether or not the plate contains ornamentation: this term is restricted to carvings which do not form components of runes, the purpose of which was presumably to decorate the inscription or perhaps obscure its meaning. I thus do not include runes themselves used as ornamentation, even in those cases where they appear to be ornamental (for example decorated with extra branches).

The current location of the runic plate and references to the most important literature are also provided. If I have examined the plate, the number of times is recorded; the dates of these examinations are found in the main text.

Björkö plate 1 (linked by a copper wire with Björkö plate 2)

Runic signature in SRD:	U NOR2002;26
Catalogue number:	18
Section in main text:	5.1.3
Dating:	900s (eV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	2002
Place of find:	fort (The Garrison), Birka, Uppland
Archaeological context:	the plates (1 and 2) were discovered on cleaning the edge of a trench in soil masses which had been excavated in the 1930s; RAÄ no: Adelsö 173
Find context:	domestic (urban environment, fortification)
Type:	A (+copper wire)
Material:	bronze
Size:	33 mm long, 6–7 mm wide, 0.9 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows on the obverse, possibly two rows on the reverse
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes, short-twig runes b , o and possibly a)
Punctuation marks:	a seriffed cross as a mark of punctuation
Ornamentation:	ornamental lines
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	ARL; find no 7038; RAÄ no: 35
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main reference:	Gustavson 2002a (photo), 2002b, 2009a (photo)

Björkö plate 2 (linked by a copper wire with Björkö plate 1)

Runic signature in SRD:	U NOR2002;28
Catalogue number:	19
Section in main text:	5.1.3
Dating:	900s (eV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	2002
Place of find:	fort (The Garrison), Birka, Uppland
Archaeological context:	the plates (1 and 2) were discovered on cleaning the edge of a trench in soil masses which had been excavated in the 1930s; RAÄ no: Adelsö 173
Find context:	domestic (urban environment, fortification)
Type:	A (+copper wire)
Material:	bronze
Size:	21 mm long, 8–9.5 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional runes on the obverse
Punctuation marks:	a seriffed cross on the reverse
Ornamentation:	ornamental lines
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	ARL; find no 7038; RAÄ no: 35
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Gustavson 2002a (photo), 2002b, 2009a (photo)

Deerness plate

Runic signature in SRD:	Or 21
Catalogue number:	1
Section in main text:	7.1
Dating:	1000–1150 (IV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	2009
Place of find:	Brough of Deerness, parish of St Andrews and Deerness, Mainland Orkney, Scotland, British Isles
Archaeological context:	the plate was found in the southern part of ‘Structure 25’ – a building of uncertain purpose; phase R
Find context:	domestic (fortification)
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	65 mm long, 9–10 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Weight:	6.02 g
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into four rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional and unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	possible marks of punctuation in the form of two diagonal strokes
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no, although attempted
Placement:	McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge; find no: 3052
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Gerrard & al. 2010; Hines 2013

Eketorp plate

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl ATA326-1087-2007
Catalogue number:	37
Section in main text:	5.2.7
Dating:	V
Year of find:	1970
Place of find:	Eketorp Fort, Eketorp, Gräsgård parish, Öland
Archaeological context:	Grid square X 13 which contained soil from several different places which were excavated in Eketorp Fort in 1970; the plate most likely belongs to Eketorp III (1000–1300s) although a dating to Eketorp II (400–700s) cannot be ruled out. RAÄ no: Gräsgård 45:1
Find context:	domestic (urban, fortification)
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	bronze
Size:	40–49 mm long, 13–15 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	from right to left on the A-side and straightforward on the B-side
Runes:	conventional and unconventional runes (balanced runes, u bind-runes as on the Roskilde plate)

Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SHM 31597
Examined by author:	yes, 3
Main references:	Gustavson 2000b

Gamla (Old) Uppsala plate 1

Runic signature in SRD:	U ATA351-1796-2014
Catalogue number:	20
Section in main text:	4.4
Dating:	1000–1100s (IV)
Year of find:	2012
Place of find:	Gamla (Old) Uppsala, Uppland
Archaeological context:	RAÄ no: Uppsala 605:1
Find context:	domestic
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	copper alloy
Size:	22 mm long, 29 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, three runes on each side
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes, short-twig runes a and n , one bind-rune ǣl)
Punctuation marks	no
Ornamentation	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	‘Arkeologerna’ SHM; find no: 909; context: 32 4265; find unit: 32 4970
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Källström 2013b, 2014c

Gamla (Old) Uppsala plate 2

Runic signature in SRD:	no signature
Catalogue number:	21
Section in main text:	5.2.1
Dating:	V, runological dating
Year of find:	2012
Place of find:	Gamla (Old) Uppsala, Uppland
Archaeological context:	disturbed layer
Find context:	domestic
Type:	B
Material:	copper
Size:	61 mm long (when straightened), 24–26 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional and unconventional runes (balanced runes)

Punctuation marks	no
Ornamentation	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	‘Arkeologerna’ SHM; find no: 2055; context: 35 8398; find unit: 35 9227
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Källström 2017b

Gorodišče plate 1

Runic signature in SRD:	RU Melnikova2001;181
Catalogue number:	10
Section in main text:	7.2.1
Dating:	900s (eV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1983
Place of find:	Rjurikovo Gorodišče, Novgorod, Russia
Archaeological context:	found in a household waste pit at a depth of half a metre together with ceramic fragments which permit a dating to the end of the 900s/beginning of the 1000s
Find context:	domestic (urban environment, fortification)
Type:	A (+wire)
Material:	bronze
Size:	58 mm long, 16–21.5 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	perhaps a large opening mark in the shape of a cross
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	NHM: 1650/8
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Mel’nikova 1987:163–166, 1994:232–239, 2001:180–188

Gorodišče plate 2

Runic signature in SRD:	RU Melnikova2001;189
Catalogue number:	11
Section in main text:	7.2.1
Dating:	900s (eV), runological dating
Year of find:	1983
Place of find:	Rjurikovo Gorodišče, Novgorod, Russia
Archaeological context:	found in the same household waste pit as Gorodišče plate 1 but at a depth of 0.6–0.8 metres in disturbed cultural layers
Find context:	domestic (urban environment, fortification)
Type:	A
Material:	bronze
Size:	49 mm long, 12–13 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows

Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	unconventional
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	NHM: 1643/3
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Mel'nikova 1987:163–166, 1994:232–239, 2001:188–189

Gyldensgård plate

Runic signature in SRD:	DR NOR2004;8
Alternative signatures:	DK no: Bh 60
Catalogue number:	2
Section in main text:	6.4.3
Dating:	1050–1199 (IV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	2002
Place of find:	Gyldensgård, Østermarie parish, Bornholm
Archaeological context:	found by metal detector south of Gyldensgård in a domestic context from the late Viking or early Middle Ages
Find context:	domestic
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	bronze
Size:	60 mm long, 12–13 mm wide, 2–3 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes?), large distance between the runes
Punctuation marks:	possibly a cross-shaped mark of punctuation
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	owned by KNM:D 272/2004, kept at Bornholm museum: 3195x3
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Stoklund & al. (2004b:7–8); Steenholt Olesen 2010 (photo p. 164)

Gällungs plate 1

Runic signature in SRD:	G 261
Catalogue number:	13
Section in main text:	5.3.1
Dating:	900s (eV)
Year of find:	1973
Place of find:	Gällungs, Gotland
Archaeological context:	cemetery (RAÄ no: Väskinde 65:1) in Gällungs. Around 20 graves in the western part of the cemetery were investigated in 1973: 12 inhumation graves within round or rectangular stone settings (one the grave of a horseman) and four certain crema-

	tion graves. All of these were Viking-Age; the plate comes from one of the graves although it is unclear which.
Find context:	grave
Type:	C, roll
Material:	bronze
Size:	80 mm long when straightened, 14 mm wide, 10 mm diameter
Layout of inscription:	lines of carving seem to occur on both sides
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	one unconventional bind-rune
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SHM 32391
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Snædal in <i>GR</i> 3, G 261

Gällungs plate 2

Runic signature in SRD:	G 261
Catalogue number:	14
Section in main text:	5.3.1
Dating:	900s (cV)
Year of find:	1973
Place of find:	Gällungs, Gotland
Archaeological context:	cemetery (RAÄ no: Väskinde 65:1) in Gällungs. Around 20 graves in the western part of the cemetery were investigated in 1973: 12 inhumation graves within round or rectangular stone settings (one the grave of a horseman) and four certain cremation graves. All of these were Viking-Age; the plate comes from one of the graves although it is unclear which.
Find context:	grave
Type:	C, roll
Material:	bronze
Size:	45 mm long when straightened, 21 mm wide, 9 mm in diameter
Layout of inscription:	two sides, four rows on the outer side; the inside is impossible to see but appears to contain carved lines
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SHM 32391
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Snædal in <i>GR</i> 3, G 261

Hallbjäns plate

Runic signature in SRD:	G 361
Catalogue number:	15
Section in main text:	3.1

Dating:	700–750 (eV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1965
Place of find:	Hallbjäns, Gotland
Archaeological context:	burial mound; RAÄ no: Sundre 11:1
Find context:	grave
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	41.3 mm long, 10.4 mm wide, 0.6 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	one side, not divided into rows
Reading order:	from left to right until the middle of the inscription whereupon the plate is turned 180 degrees and the inscription reads from left to right until the middle again
Runes:	conventional runes: long-branch runes and one short-twig rune n . Rune f is read as /a/ or /q/. Rune h is read as /h/ or /a/.
Punctuation marks:	perhaps three vertical strokes as an opening mark
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM 32403:16 (since 2014 on a travelling exhibition which will return in 2019)
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Birkmann 1995:227–229; Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1981: 186–191; Gustavson & Snædal in <i>GR</i> 3, G 361; Snædal 2002:43

Hovgård plate

Runic signature in SRD:	U NOR1994;26A
Catalogue number:	17
Section in main text:	5.1.2
Dating:	900s (eV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1993
Place of find:	Hovgården, Alsnö House, Adelsö parish, Uppland
Archaeological context:	RAÄ no: Adelsö 252. The plate was found in a disturbed layer with terrace constructions, c. 3 metres in front of runestone U 11; the terrace constructions have been considered to belong to the harbour and the place was registered in FMIS as domestic.
Find context:	domestic
Type:	A (+silver wire)
Material:	bronze
Size:	60 mm long, 14 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into four rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	undetermined but to judge from the conventional runes and marks of punctuation – straightforward
Runes:	conventional runes (k , b , t) and unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	Opening mark (∶ ∶) and separating marks (∶)
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SHM 35224
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson 1994b, 1994c, 1994d

Hässelby plate

Runic signature in SRD:	U FJÖLNIR1985;2;28
Catalogue number:	22
Section in main text:	5.3.2
Dating:	1000s (mV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1984
Place of find:	Hässelby, Börje parish, Uppland
Archaeological context:	Vendel-Age domestic context in Hässelby with Viking-Age graves (1000s). The plate was found in a stone setting otherwise devoid of finds; perhaps the grave of a child or a symbolic grave. The plate may have had a leather and wood case. RAÄ no: Börje 151:1.
Find context:	grave
Type:	C, fragmentary, pendant
Material:	bronze
Size:	reconstructed length of 70 mm, reconstructed width of 20 mm, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into four rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes?)
Punctuation marks:	unclear
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	County Museum of Uppland, site 151; find no: 142:73
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Karlenby 1985

Högstena plate

Runic signature in SRD:	Vg 216
Catalogue number:	35
Section in main text:	4.3
Dating:	1050–1150 (IV), runological dating
Year of find:	1920
Place of find:	Högstena church cemetery, Västergötland
Archaeological context	lacking; RAÄ no: Högstena 22:3
Find context	grave
Type:	B, broken into two parts (C?)
Material:	bronze
Size:	88 mm (71+17) long, 19–20 mm wide, 1.3–1.4 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into four rows; two on each side
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional runes
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM 16449
Examined by author:	yes, 3
Main references:	Jungner 1936; Nordén 1943:175–177; Strid 1994; Svärdström 1967; Svärdström in <i>VgR</i> , Vg 216

Järfälla plate

Runic signature in SRD:	U Fv1969;210
Catalogue number:	23
Section in main text:	4.2
Dating:	1000 (mV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1962
Place of find:	Veddesta farm, Järfälla, Uppland
Archaeological context:	the plate was found in a cemetery within a stone setting lacking bone remains, perhaps a symbolic burial. The plate was in a leather case. RAÄ no: Järfälla 29:2
Find context:	grave
Type:	B
Material:	copper
Size:	47 mm long, 22 mm wide, 0.20 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes), one bind-rune (correction)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	a network of diagonal lines covering the entire inscription
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM 27291:6
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson 1969; Källström 1998:28–30

Klinta plate 1

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl BN83
Catalogue number:	38
Section in main text:	5.1.6
Dating:	900s (eV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1957
Place of find:	Klinta, Köpingsvik parish, Öland
Archaeological context:	cairn; the plates (1 and 2) were found in a female's ship cremation. RAÄ no: Köping 59:3
Find context:	grave
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	22 mm long, 8–9 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	one side, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional runes: short-twig rune n
Punctuation marks:	a cross-shaped mark of punctuation?
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SHM 25840:59:3
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson 2004:66 f.; Nilsson 1973 no 83

Klinta plate 2

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl BN84
Catalogue number:	39
Section in main text:	5.1.6
Dating:	900s (eV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1957
Place of find:	Klinta, Köpingsvik parish, Öland
Archaeological context:	cairn; the plates (1 and 2) were found in a female's ship cremation. RAA no: Köping 59:3
Find context:	grave
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	44–45 mm long, 9–10 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes, short-twig runes)
Punctuation marks:	vertical stroke as a mark of punctuation?
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SHM 25840:59:3
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson 2004:66 f.; Nilsson 1973 no 84

Kvinneby plate

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl SAS1989;43
Catalogue number:	40
Section in main text:	3.3
Dating:	1000–1150 (IV), runological dating
Year of find:	1955
Place of find:	Södra Kvinneby, Stenåsa parish, Öland
Archaeological context:	lacking; the plate was discovered in a private garden
Find context:	unknown
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	52 mm long, 49 mm wide, 1.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; five rows on the obverse and four on the reverse. A picture of a fish terminates the inscription.
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes, dotted runes g , y , e) and unconventional (runes with non-graphematic branches)
Punctuation marks:	a cross-shaped opening sign
Ornamentation:	depiction of a fish
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM 25654
Examined by author:	yes, 5
Main references:	Grønvik 1992; Lindquist 1987; Louis-Jensen 2005, 2006; Nilsson 1973, 1976; Westlund 1989

Ladoga plate

Runic signature in SRD:	RU Melnikova2001;196
Catalogue number:	12
Section in main text:	7.2.2
Dating:	800–950 (eV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1975
Place of find:	Varangian Street, Staraja Ladoga, Russia
Archaeological context:	the plate was found in the ruins of a large building which is considered to be a facility for the practice of cult or trade
Find context:	domestic (urban)
Type:	A (+bronze attachment)
Material:	copper
Size:	48 mm long, 14.2–18 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	unconventional (balanced runes, older runes) and one conventional rune (s).
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	Staraja Ladoga Historical-Architectural and Archaeological Museum: CAE-75. JIII-1/1303
Examined by author:	yes, 5
Main references:	Kuz'menko 1997b; Mel'nikova 1994:231 f., 2001:189–200; Petrenko & Kuz'menko 1979:78–84

Leksand plate

Runic signature in SRD:	D Fv1984;250
Catalogue number:	16
Section in main text:	5.1.1
Dating:	1000–1100s (IV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1983
Place of find:	Yttermo, Leksand parish, Dalarna
Archaeological context:	area D (RAÄ no: Leksand 985-1) with six inhumation graves. The plate was placed on the forehead of one skeleton; this grave also contained a knife.
Find context:	grave
Type:	A
Material:	bronze
Size:	39–41 mm long, 15–17 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional runes
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes, for the first time
Placement:	DM: 20152:216

Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Agåker 2010:79 f.; Ersgård 1997:24–27, 45–47; Gustavson & Snædal Brink 1984:250 f.

Lockarp plate

Runic signature in SRD:	DR NOR2003;20
Alternative signatures:	DK no: Sk 134
Catalogue number:	8
Section in main text:	6.4.2
Dating:	1000–1050, (mV) archaeological dating
Year of find:	2002
Place of find:	Lockarp, Scania
Archaeological context:	metal detector find close to feature no 24 (Viking-Age settlement); RAÄ no: Lockarp 24:1
Find context:	domestic (rural environment)
Type:	B
Material:	copper
Size:	39 mm long, 14 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	one side, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (perhaps one or two bind-runes)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	Museums of Malmö: 12756:19 (?)
Examined by author:	no
Main references:	Gustavson 2003b:20 f.

Lund plate 1

Runic signature in SRD:	DR Fv1993;226
Alternative signatures:	DK no: SkL 74
Catalogue number:	6
Section in main text:	6.3.1
Dating:	1000s (mV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1990
Place of find:	Lund, Scania
Archaeological context:	Viking-Age settlement; RAÄ no: Lund 73:1
Find context:	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	A (+ metal plaque)
Material:	most probably copper alloy
Size:	55 mm long, 20 mm wide, 4 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	runes are visible on the obverse, with lines terminating the row visible along the long side
Reading order:	from right to left and from left to right in the same row with a starting point in the centre of the writing surface
Runes:	conventional and unconventional
Punctuation marks:	no

Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	Lund Museum of Cultural History: 76420:172
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Snædal, Stoklund & Åhlén 1993:226 f.

Lund plate 2 †

Runic signature in SRD:	DR Fv1988;238
Alternative signatures:	DK no: SkL70
Catalogue number:	7
Section in main text:	6.4.1
Dating:	990–1000 (mV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1984
Place of find:	the large churchyard which belonged to an earlier stave church, in the ‘St. Clemens’ block, plot 9, Lund, Scania
Archaeological context:	grave, found on the left shoulder of the skeleton of a man aged 20–25 years. Grave no: 2388; RAÄ no: Lund 73:1
Find context:	grave
Type:	B
Material:	bronze
Size:	40 mm long, 15 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	one side, two rows divided by a line
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional (+inverted u ?) and unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	Lund Museum of Cultural History: 71839: 2150
Examined by author:	no, missing from the museum
Main references:	Snædal, Stoklund & Åhlén 1988:238 f.

Roskilde plate

Runic signature in SRD:	DR 246
Alternative signatures:	DK no: Sj 27
Catalogue number:	5
Section in main text	6.1.2
Dating:	1050–1100, (IV) runological dating
Year of find:	1866
Place of find:	Roskilde
Archaeological context:	metal detector find
Find context:	unknown
Type:	A (+copper wire)
Material:	bronze
Size:	90 mm long, 10–12 mm wide, 1.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward

Runes:	conventional and unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	a cross-shaped mark (×) of punctuation and a stroke (ı)
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	KNM: D 29
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Jacobsen & Moltke in <i>DRI</i> , DR 246; Lindquist 1932:66 f., fn.1; Steenholt Olesen 2007:94–98; Stephens 1867–68:864

Sigtuna plate 1

Runic signature in SRD:	U Fv1933;134
Alternative signatures:	SI 5
Catalogue number:	24
Section in main text:	3.2
Dating:	1000–1050 (mV), runological dating
Year of find:	1931
Place of find:	in the ‘Granhäcken’ block, Sigtuna, Uppland
Archaeological context:	lacking; RAÄ no: Sigtuna 195:1
Find context:	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	82 mm long, 27.5–29 mm wide, 0.9 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into five rows; two rows on the obverse, three on the reverse
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes, one bind-rune – correction) and unconventional runes (staveless runes)
Punctuation marks:	cross-shaped marks of punctuation
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM 19692
Examined by author:	yes, 5
Main references:	Eriksson & Zetterholm 1933; Lindquist 1932, 1936; Nordén 1943:166–172; Olsen 1940; Pipping 1933; Gustavson 2009c; Gustavson & Källström 2016:21

Sigtuna plate 2

Runic signature in SRD:	U AST1;166
Alternative signatures:	SI 3
Catalogue number:	25
Section in main text:	4.8
Dating:	1000–1199 (IV), runological dating
Year of find:	1927
Place of find:	in the ‘Humlegården’ block, Sigtuna, Uppland
Archaeological context:	trenches 7 and 8, disturbed cultural layer; the plate was found together with Sigtuna plate 3 at a depth of c. half a metre. RAÄ no: Sigtuna 6:2
Find context	domestic (urban environment)

Type:	C
Material:	copper
Size:	82 mm long, 19–22 mm wide, 0.7 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into three rows on each side, of which only five are used for runes – three on the obverse and two on the reverse
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes, dotted runes y , g) and unconventional runes (staveless runes, bind-runes, twig runes)
Punctuation marks:	yes, and ×
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SF 1305:2
Examined by author:	yes, 4
Main references:	Nordén 1943:154–170; Svärdström 1969a:37 fn. 2; Gustavson 2014; Gustavson & Källström 2016:21 f.

Sigtuna plate 3

Runic signature in SRD:	U AST1;171
Alternative signatures:	SI 4
Catalogue number:	26
Section in main text:	5.2.2
Dating:	V
Year of find:	1927
Place of find:	in the ‘Humlegården’ block, Sigtuna, Uppland
Archaeological context:	trenches 7 and 8, disturbed cultural layer; the plate was found together with Sigtuna plate 2 at a depth of c. half a metre. RAÄ no: Sigtuna 6:2
Find context	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	recorded as both copper and bronze
Size:	42 mm long, 23 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	lines of carving on two sides
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	unclear
Ornamentation:	yes
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SF 1305:1
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Nordén 1943:170 f.; Gustavson 2013; Gustavson & Källström 2016:22

Sigtuna plate 4

Runic signature in SRD:	U Fv1986;220B
Alternative signatures:	SI 13
Catalogue number:	27
Section in main text:	5.2.3
Dating:	1000–1150 (IV), archaeological dating

Year of find:	1985
Place of find:	in the ‘Granhäcken’ block, Sigtuna, Uppland
Archaeological context	grid square D 2:2; RAÄ no: Sigtuna 6:2
Find context:	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	recorded as both copper and bronze
Size:	45 mm long, 16–20 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SF find no:182
Examined by author:	yes, 3
Main references:	Gustavson 2014; Gustavson & Åhlén 1986:11; Strid & Åhlén 1986:220; Gustavson & Källström 2016:22–23

Sigtuna plate 5

Runic signature in SRD:	no signature
Alternative signatures:	SI 119
Catalogue number:	28
Section in main text:	5.2.4
Dating:	unknown (V?)
Year of find:	unknown
Place of find:	unknown findplace in ‘Black Earth’, Sigtuna
Archaeological context:	lacking
Find context:	unknown
Type:	fragmentary (B?)
Material:	copper
Size:	116 mm long, 23–21 mm wide, 0.8 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	unconventional runes
Punctuation marks:	perhaps in the form of sun wheels
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SF:1386a
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson (SI 119); Gustavson & Källström 2016:16–19

Sigtuna plate 6

Runic signature in SRD:	no signature
Alternative signatures:	SI 118
Catalogue number:	29
Section in main text:	5.2.5

Dating:	unknown (V?)
Year of find:	1927?
Place of find:	in the ‘St. Gertrud’ block?, Sigtuna
Archaeological context:	lacking
Find context:	unknown
Type:	B
Material:	copper
Size:	58 mm long, 12–14 mm wide, 0.9 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	lines of carving are visible on one side
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional and unconventional
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	SF:1375,7
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson (SI 118); Gustavson & Källström 2016:14–16

Sigtuna plate 7

Runic signature in SRD:	no signature
Alternative signatures:	SI 120
Catalogue number:	30
Section in main text:	5.2.6
Dating:	1050–1150 (IV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	2014
Place of find:	‘Göte’s petrol station’, Sigtuna
Archaeological context:	early mediaeval settlement; RAA no: Sigtuna 195:1
Find context:	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	B
Material:	copper alloy
Size:	25 mm long, 22 mm wide, 0.8 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional and unconventional (bind-runes, runiforms)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	ARL: find no: 1/61; context no: 238; registration number: 431-23745-2011
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Gustavson (SI 120); Gustavson & Källström 2016:19–20

Skänninge plate

Runic signature in SRD:	Ög NOR2001;32
Catalogue number:	46
Section in main text:	4.5
Dating:	1000–1150 (IV), archaeological and runological dating

Year of find:	2000
Place of find:	in the 'Abbedissan' block, Motalagatan 24, Skänninge, Östergötland
Archaeological context:	cultural layer with artisan remains; RAÄ no: Skänninge 5:1
Find context	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	copper alloy (bronze?)
Size:	36 mm long, 14 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, not divided into rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	Museum of Östergötland: C4145:315
Examined by author:	no
Main references:	Björkhager & Gustavson 2002:183–194; Gustavson 2001:32; Källström 2007a:356

Skørrebrovej plate

Runic signature in SRD:	DR DKBh63
Alternative signatures	DK no: Bh 63
Catalogue number:	3
Section in main text:	6.2.1
Dating:	1000–1150 (IV), runological dating
Year of find:	2005
Place of find:	Skørrebrovej, Bornholm
Archaeological context:	metal detector find
Find context:	unknown
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	bronze
Size:	39 mm long, 15 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes, bind-runes)
Punctuation marks:	cross-shaped marks of punctuation
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	KNM: D 199/2006
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Lisbeth Imer in DK (see under internet sources)

Solberga plate 1 (linked via inscription with Solberga plate 2)

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl Fv1976;96A
Catalogue number:	41
Section in main text:	3.4

Dating:	1050–1150 (IV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1972
Place of find:	Solberga 4:11, Köpingsvik, Öland
Archaeological context:	artisan environment, feature A 403 (furnace for the production of iron); RAÄ no: Köping 216:1
Find context	domestic (urban environment, workshop)
Type:	B
Material:	copper
Size:	86 mm long, 19 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two on the obverse (without line dividers) and three on the reverse (without line dividers)
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes, one bind-rune, dotted g -rune) and unconventional (balanced runes, bind-runers, enhanced runes); opening and closing signs in the form of three vertical lines
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM find ID: 1182776 (find no 1413; RAÄ no: 1533/74)
Examined by author:	yes, 3
Main references:	Gustavson 1976, 2004:63–66, 2017:63–99

Solberga plate 2 (linked via inscription with Solberga plate 1)

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl Fv1976;96B
Catalogue number:	42
Section in main text:	3.4
Dating:	1050–1150 (IV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1972
Place of find:	Solberga 4:11, Köpingsvik, Öland
Archaeological context:	artisan environment, feature A 403 (furnace for the production of iron); RAÄ no: Köping 216:1
Find context:	domestic (urban environment, workshop)
Type:	A, three holes
Material:	copper
Size:	84–85 mm long, 12–19 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two rows on each side (no line dividers)
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes, one dotted y -rune)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM find-ID: 1182776 (find no 1413; RAÄ no: 1533/74)
Examined by author:	yes, 3
Main references:	Gustavson 1976, 2004:63–66, 2017:63–99

Solberga plate 3

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl ATA6371/83
Catalogue number:	43
Section in main text:	5.1.7
Dating:	V
Year of find:	1983
Place of find:	Solberga 4:8, Köpingsvik, Öland
Archaeological context:	investigation alongside the old guesthouse Solvik on Solberga 4:8. RAÄ no: Köping 216:1
Find context:	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	44 mm long, 26 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two rows on the obverse and three on the reverse
Runes:	unconventional runes, palimpsest?
Punctuation marks:	unclear
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	County Museum of Kalmar?, registration number 6371/83
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Gustavson 2004:68

Solberga plate 4

Runic signature in SRD:	Öl ATA423-2541-1996
Catalogue number:	44
Section in main text:	5.1.7
Dating:	V
Year of find:	1990
Place of find:	Solberga 4:8, Köpingsvik, Öland
Archaeological context:	southwest part of the property (stage 2, trench 1); RAÄ no: Köping 216:1
Find context:	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	A (+wire)
Material:	bronze
Size:	26–27 mm long, 10–11 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	lines of carving on both sides
Runes:	rune-like markings
Punctuation marks	no
Ornamentation	yes
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	County Museum of Kalmar?, find no 447
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Gustavson 2004:68

Solberga plate 5

Runic signature in SRD:	no signature
Catalogue number:	45
Section in main text:	5.1.7
Dating:	V
Year of find:	1972
Place of find:	Solberga 4:11, Köpingsvik, Öland
Archaeological context:	A 460, trench 24; RAÄ no: Köping 216:1
Find context	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	A (+wire)
Material:	copper
Size:	39–40 mm long, 12–14 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	lines of carving on both sides
Runes:	no, but there are ornamental rune-like markings
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	yes
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	County Museum of Kalmar, find no 1545; RAÄ no: 533/74
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Gustavson 2004:67 f.

Sunnerby plate

Runic signature in SRD:	no signature
Catalogue number:	36
Section in main text:	5.1.5
Dating:	V
Year of find:	2012
Place of find:	Sunnerby, Otterstad parish on Kållandsö, Västergötland (Sunnerby 9:1, site RAÄ 57)
Archaeological context:	metal detector find in the plough layer of a settlement at Sunnerby, Otterstad parish (RAÄ no: Otterstad 386)
Find context:	domestic
Type:	A, fragmentary
Material:	copper
Size:	23 mm long, 22–23 mm wide, 0.8 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides; two rows on the reverse
Runes:	conventional and unconventional runes (balanced runes)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	yes
Interpreted:	no
Placement:	Väner Museum, find no 299
Examined by author:	no
Main references:	Källström 2014b

Ulvsunda plate

Runic signature in SRD:	U AST1;150
Catalogue number:	31
Section in main text:	4.1
Dating:	800s (eV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1939
Place of find:	Ulvsunda, Uppland
Archaeological context:	large solitary mound with central cairn; RAÄ no: Bromma 138:1
Find context	grave (pre-Christian, female's?)
Type:	B
Material:	bronze
Size:	16.5 mm long, 9.5 mm wide, 0.3 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	one side, two rows
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (short-twig runes)
Punctuation marks:	perhaps two straight lines () as a mark of termination
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	SHM 22695
Examined by author:	yes, 4
Main references:	Nordén 1943:146–154

Uppåkra plate

Runic signature in SRD:	DR NOR2000;8C
Alternative signatures	Dk no: Sk 7
Catalogue number:	9
Section in main text:	6.2.2
Dating:	1000–1050 (mV), archaeological dating
Year of find:	1999
Place of find:	Uppåkra, Scania
Archaeological context:	metal detector find; RAÄ no: Uppåkra 5:1
Find context	domestic (urban environment)
Type:	fragmentary
Material:	bronze
Size:	25 mm long, 7 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	one side
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional runes (short-twig runes)
Punctuation marks:	cross-shaped marks of punctuation
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	Historical Museum at Lund University: 31000: 3574
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Stoklund 2000:8 f.

Vassunda plate 3

Runic signature in SRD:	U AST1;183
Catalogue number:	32
Section in main text:	4.7
Dating:	V
Year of find:	1925
Place of find:	Vassunda rectory, Uppland
Archaeological context:	inhumation grave (early Christian grave); the plate was found on the right side or left hip of the skeleton together with two other copper plates (Vassunda plates 1 and 2). RAÄ no: Vassunda 79:5
Find context:	grave (Christian)
Type:	B
Material:	copper
Size:	48 mm long, 34 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; three rows on the obverse and four on the reverse
Reading order:	boustrophedon
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	Museum of Nordic Archaeology in Uppsala: 5711:3
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Nordén 1943:183–186

Villberga plate

Runic signature in SRD:	U AST1;174
Catalogue number:	33
Section in main text:	5.1.4
Dating:	V
Year of find:	unknown, purchased by Museum of Nordic Archaeology in Uppsala in 1928
Place of find:	unknown, Villberga, Uppland
Archaeological context:	lacking
Find context:	unknown
Type:	A
Material:	copper
Size:	46 mm long, 32–33 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; three rows on each side
Reading order:	straightforward
Runes:	conventional (long-branch runes), ᚱ for vowel
Punctuation marks:	a cross-shaped mark of punctuation
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	Museum of Nordic Archaeology in Uppsala: 5506:28
Examined by author:	yes, 2
Main references:	Eriksson & Zetterholm 1933:138; Nordén 1943:173–175

Østermarie plate

Runic signature in SRD:	DR AUD1999;288
Alternative signatures	DK no: Bh 58
Catalogue number:	4
Section in main text:	6.1.1
Dating:	1000–1125 (IV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1998
Place of find:	Englyst, Bornholm
Archaeological context:	metal detector find in a settlement area with Viking-Age and mediaeval finds
Find context:	domestic (rural environment)
Type:	A, fragmentary
Material:	silver
Size:	22 mm long, 20 mm wide, 1 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; three rows on the obverse and four on the reverse
Reading order:	boustrophedon in spirals
Runes:	conventional runes (long-branch runes, dotted runes e and perhaps g)
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	yes
Placement:	NM: D 10/2000
Examined by author:	yes, 1
Main references:	Källström 2007a:168, 341; Steenholt Olesen 2007:86–94; Stoklund 1999:299–305, 2000:4–6, 2003:863–867

Östra Aros plate †

Runic signature in SRD:	U Uppl1969;32
Catalogue number:	34
Section in main text:	5.3.3
Dating:	end of 1000s–1100s (IV), archaeological and runological dating
Year of find:	1969
Place of find:	St. Peter's church ruin, Uppsala
Archaeological context:	in soil from the bottommost layer of skeletons among the graves; RAÄ no: Uppsala 63:1
Find context	grave (Christian)
Type:	C
Material:	bronze
Size:	36 mm long (straightened), 29 mm wide, 0.5 mm thick
Layout of inscription:	two sides, divided into rows; two rows on each side
Reading order:	undetermined
Runes:	conventional
Punctuation marks:	no
Ornamentation:	no
Interpreted:	no

Placement:	County Museum of Uppland: 13000:241
Examined by author:	no, missing from County Museum of Uppland
Main references:	Svärdström 1969a, 1969b

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